

LOST VILLAGES OF THE EASTERN ALEUTIANS

BIORKA·KASHEGA·MAKUSHIN

by
RAY HUDSON
&
RACHEL MASON





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During World War II the remote Aleutian Islands, home to the Unanga (Aleut) people for over 8,000 years, became one of the fiercely contested battlegrounds of the Pacific. This thousand-mile-long archipelago saw the first invasion of American soil since the War of 1812, a mass internment of American civilians, a 15-month air war, and one of the deadliest battles in the Pacific Theatre.



In 1996 Congress designated the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area to interpret, educate, and inspire present and future generations about the history of the Unanga and the Aleutian Islands in the defense of the United States in World War II. In a unique arrangement, the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area and visitor center are owned and managed by the Ounalashka Corporation (the village corporation for Unalaska) and the National Park Service provides them with technical assistance. Through this cooperative partnership, the Unanga are the keepers of their history and invite the public to learn more about their past and present.

This project was funded by the National Park Service, Affiliated Areas Program in support of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area, in cooperation with the Aleutian Pribilof Heritage Group.

For information about the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area, visit www.nps.gov/aleu/ or contact:

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Lost Villages of the Eastern Aleutians: Biorka, Kashtega, Makushin

Ray Hudson/Rachel Mason

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Three Storytellers. Note: All woodblock prints in this publication by Ray Hudson. © Ray Hudson. Reproduction in any manner prohibited without the artist's consent.

Front cover: Nikolai Lekanoff, Sr., and his daughter Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory, Makushin, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Lauren Adams.

Title page: Biorka, rain, fog, September 3, 2010. Photograph by Carlene Arnold.

Contents

Preface	V
PART ONE: THOSE OLD-TIME PEOPLE	1
Chapter 1	1
Chapter 3	29
Chapter 5	65
Chapter 6	83
Chapter 7	109
PART TWO: THE FINAL DECADES	131
Chapter 8	131
Chapter 9	141
Chapter 12	185
Chapter 13	195
Chapter 14	207
Chapter 15	219
Chapter 16	235
Chapter 17	243
Chapter 18	257
Chapter 19	275
Epilogue	283

*First and most importantly,
we want to thank the elders...*

"Helping George" at
Kashega. September
2, 2010. Photograph by
Roberta Gordaoff.



Preface



First and most importantly, we want to thank the elders who shared information about Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. Without their participation, this project would have been, if not impossible, certainly less meaningful and detailed. In 2004 interviews were conducted with Nikolai Galaktionoff, Moses Gordieff, Nikolai S. Lekanoff, Irene Makarin, and Eva Tcheripanoff. By the time this book was begun, Irene and Moses had passed away. Nick Galaktionoff died a few weeks before it was completed. Special thanks go to Mary Diakanoff and George Gordaoff for conversations about their memories of Kashega.

All errors of fact and interpretation are due to our inadequate understanding. We would encourage descendants of people who lived in these villages to record the accounts that exist within their families, however brief, however insignificant they might seem, so that future historians from among Unangaꝰ themselves will tell this story with greater accuracy and depth.

Several individuals preceded us in this project and we have built on their work. They include Linda Cook, Yvonne Meyer, Bruce Greenwood, and Annaliese Jacobs Bateman. Janis Kozlowski at the National Park Service (NPS) has long championed the Lost Villages Project. The project was made possible by the enthusiastic support of the Ounalashka Corporation (OC), partners with the NPS and managers of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area. The OC generously contributed a Russian Orthodox cross to plant at the site of each of the villages of Makushin, Kashega and Biorka.

Carlene Arnold's 2011 thesis on the evacuation, including interviews with Mary Diakanoff, Alice Petrivelli, and George Gordaoff, was of great help. Special thanks go to Marti Murray for her heroic genealogical work as a component of the Lost Villages Project. Her mini-biographies were especially valuable during the writing of the final chapters. We want to thank Mary Diakanoff for photographs of Kashega. The photographs from the Alice Moller Collection are courtesy of AB Rankin. Thanks also to Jennie Lekanoff for her photographs.

Many individuals contributed to this volume: Candace Beery, Anna Jean Bereskin, Shawn Dickson, Jeff Dickrell, Okalena Patricia Lekanoff-Gregory, Cora Holmes, Alex and Rena Kudrin, Frederick Lekanoff, Michael Livingston, Jane Mensoff, John Moller, Michael Swetzof, and Lydia Borenin Vincler. Thanks also to Millie McKeown, Cultural Heritage Director at the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association for making its library and archive available. Zoya Johnson provided translations from Russian material. Valuable late 19th century material was made available by J. Penelope Goforth's project, *Bringing Aleutian History Home: the Lost Ledgers of the Alaska Commercial Company 1875-1897*. We thank her for allowing the reproduction of a page from one of the ledgers. Debbie Corbett, Peat Galaktionoff, and Doug Veltre read the manuscript and made numerous helpful suggestions for which we are very grateful. Eileen Devinney skillfully edited and proofread manuscripts at several phases of this project. Francis Broderick of Archgraphics crafted the book with sensitivity, professionalism, and an eye for details. His persistence in rendering words in Unangam tunuu with accurate typography, locating historical images, and placing them so they enhanced the text are deeply appreciated.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to various archives. These include the National Archives and Record Administration in Washington, D.C. and Suitland, Maryland, along with its branch facilities in Seattle and Anchorage; Smithsonian Archives; National Anthropological Archives; Archives and Special Collections Department at the University of Alaska Anchorage; Alaska and Polar Regions Collections and Archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks; Special Collections at the University of Washington; the Bancroft Library, University of California; and the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries. Special thanks to Tatyana Stepanova at the Alaska State Archives for helping to resolve a difficult question about the evacuation.

Each of us is indebted to specific individuals.

Ray Hudson: AB Rankin invited me along on a trip to Kashega in 1994. The late Steve McGlashan made a 1970 visit to Makushin possible. Although I met Andrew Makarin and George Borenin in the early 1960s, I was unaware of the significant roles they had played in their villages. In the years prior to the Lost Villages Project, I benefited from conversations with Nicholai Lekanoff, Nicholai Galaktionoff, Dora Kudrin, Polly Lekanoff, Alice Moller, and Sophia Pletnikoff. Father Ishmael Gromoff and Matushka Platonida Gromoff provided translations during interviews with Sophia Pletnikoff, Nick Galaktionoff, and Andrew Makarin (this last was conducted by Dorothy Jones). I continue to be indebted to Flora Tutiakoff for sharing material from her late husband, Philemon Tutiakoff. It has been my honor to work from his copy of Kirtland and Coffin's *The Relocation and Internment of the Aleuts during World War II*.

Rachel Mason: All those who made the visits to Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin possible enriched this story. I would like to thank Debbie Corbett for making the boat charters possible. Many thanks to Captain Billy and the crew of the *Tigla* for their assistance, not only with the boat travel, but with events at the village sites, including digging holes to plant crosses. Thank you also to Lauren Adams of KUCB, Unalaska Community Broadcasting, as well as Laresa Syvertson and Alexandra Gutierrez, for recording the village visits on videotape. Thank you to Gregory Jones, Jane Mensoff, Patty Gregory, Josy Shangin, and Roberta Gordaoff for documenting our experiences in photographs. I am also grateful for the research and field assistance of Shannon Apgar-Kurtz in the early stages of the project, and for Marilyn Bost's help in the final stages.

Finally, a word about the spelling of family names. Contemporary spellings often differ from the transliterations used by scholars. For example, today's *Shaishnikoff* family finds its ancestors referred to as *Shaiashnikovs*. Even among close relatives, spelling may differ, as with the brothers Walter *Dyakanoff* and Cecil *Diakanoff*. When quoting 19th century material directly, that spelling was retained. This was often phonetically odd in Alaska Commercial Company documents. Generally, scholarly transliterations were used when referring to 19th century individuals. When writing about individuals in the 20th century, however, we used spellings preferred by contemporary families. Thus, Abraham *Yatchemenev* (active c. 1850) appears as do both Alexei *Yatchmeneff* and John *Yatchmenoff* (for 20th century individuals). The 19th century Petukhovs became the 20th century Petukoff and, later, the Petikoff families. Similar quandaries exist with given names. For example, Ivan Denisoff was known as *Ivan* to his village contemporaries, but generally referred to as *John* in English language records and by exclusively English speakers. To force consistency would suggest a misleading cultural continuity. *Aleut* and *Unanga* (with its grammatical and regional variations) are used somewhat interchangeably, but with a tendency to employ *Aleut* in contexts where that word was historically used and *Unanga* at other times. *Unangan*, although typographically convenient and easier to pronounce, is the eastern plural and not the collective noun.



Ruins of the structure protecting the altar site at the Chapel of St. Nicholas at Biorka. Photograph by Marie Lowe.

PART ONE: THOSE OLD-TIME PEOPLE

Chapter 1 The Three Villages



When Andrew Makarin dismantled and burned the Chapel of St. Nicholas at Biorka in the mid-1960s, he formally extinguished the last of three traditional villages that had survived thousands of years on or near Unalaska Island in the eastern Aleutians.¹ Born in 1889, he had become its most influential and tenacious resident. But now it was over. The last resident of Kashega, George Borenin, had moved away a few years earlier, while the third village, Makushin, had succumbed at the outbreak of World War II. The war had hastened the end of these three villages, but they had survived into the 20th century long after others near them had disappeared. What resources had sustained them decade after decade? What crises had they weathered? How had relationships among them changed? What factors had led to their decline? Who had played key roles in their fortunes and misfortunes?

Once the flames from the burning chapel had died out and the ashes had cooled, a wooden shell was erected over the site of the altar to protect the consecrated ground. Surmounted with a cross, the four-sided pyramidal roof sloped down to the walls, the whole standing about five feet above the scorched earth. Andrew died a few years later. Decades passed. The few remaining houses collapsed. Storms splayed their walls and roofs like playing cards across an arc of land resting between a lake and Beaver Inlet, an arm of the Bering Sea. The wild rye that floods the shoreline grew closer until it nearly consumed the small structure. In 2009 and 2010 the National Park Service, as part of its Lost Villages Project, sponsored trips aboard the U.S. Fish and Wildlife vessel *Tiglaġ* to the three villages for a few former residents, their children and grandchildren.

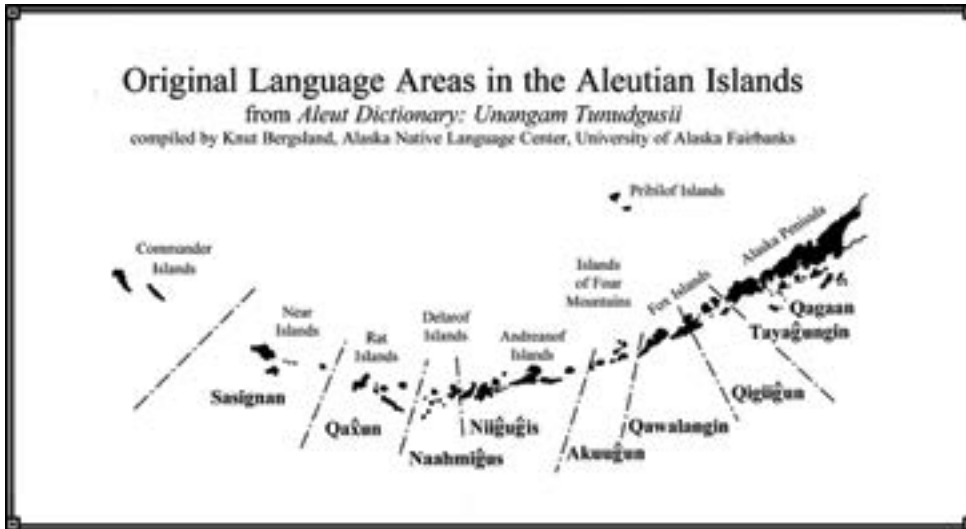
1 Only one other traditional village remained in this region—Nikolski, on Umnak Island. For the depth and complexity of settlements in the Unalaska Bay area, see Knecht and Davis, “The Amaknak Bridge Site.” Called Iliuliuk throughout the 19th century, the village of Unalaska had been established by Russians as a fur-trading center between 1775 and 1778. Even as it absorbed surrounding villages, its core remained a commercial center controlled by outsiders. In a smaller but similar way, Akutan Village was established by late 1876 or early 1877 to meet the needs of the Alaska Commercial Company.

Makushin was reached the first year while Kashega and Biorka were visited in 2010. At Biorka, Irene McGlashan and Kathy Dirks (Andrew's granddaughter) stood beside a new wooden cross erected near the now crumbling structure that had protected the altar site and sang *Memory Eternal [Vechnaya Pamyat]*, the concluding hymn in the service for the dead.

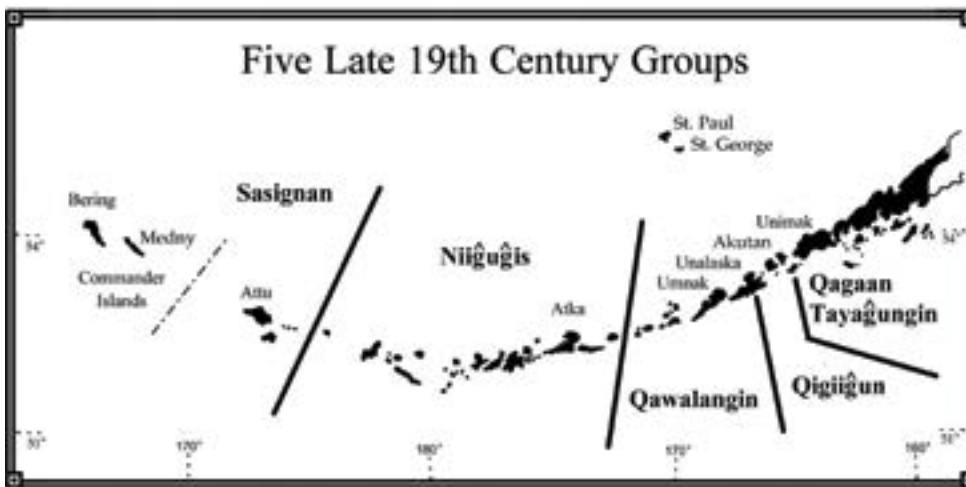
The razing of St. Nicholas Chapel followed by the erection of the protective shell and the visit forty-five years later provide fitting metaphors for the Lost Villages Project: fire and remembrance. This book is another portion of that project. It attempts to trace the history of these three villages through the crucible of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, into the initially prosperous decade under the United States, and then across the first half of the 20th century that saw debilitating poverty, war, relocations, and abandonment.

The newly planted cross at Biorka, 2010. Left to right: Irene McGlashan, Frederick Lekanoff, Jane Mensoff, Kathy Dirks, Brian Rankin, Eva Kudrin. Photograph by Greg Jones.





Map of the Original Language Areas in the Aleutian Islands. Map by Ray Hudson.



Map of the Five Late 19th Century Groups (including the Pribilof Islands). Map by Ray Hudson.

Village Locations

Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin were villages in an area of the eastern Aleutians occupied for millennia by two relatively distinct groups of Unangaꝰ. Over thousands of years, linguistic, cultural, and political differences had arisen across the thousand-mile chain of islands that were significant enough to produce rivalries and wars. There were eight major groups present when Russians first ventured into the Bering Sea in the 1740s, after a centuries-long eastward expansion across their northern continent.² By the time the United States purchased Alaska in 1867, three groups were gone. Although the wars among those that remained had long been over, there were still rivalries and cultural differences that endured into the 20th century.

2 Bergsland and Dirks, *Aleut Tales and Narratives*, 2-4.

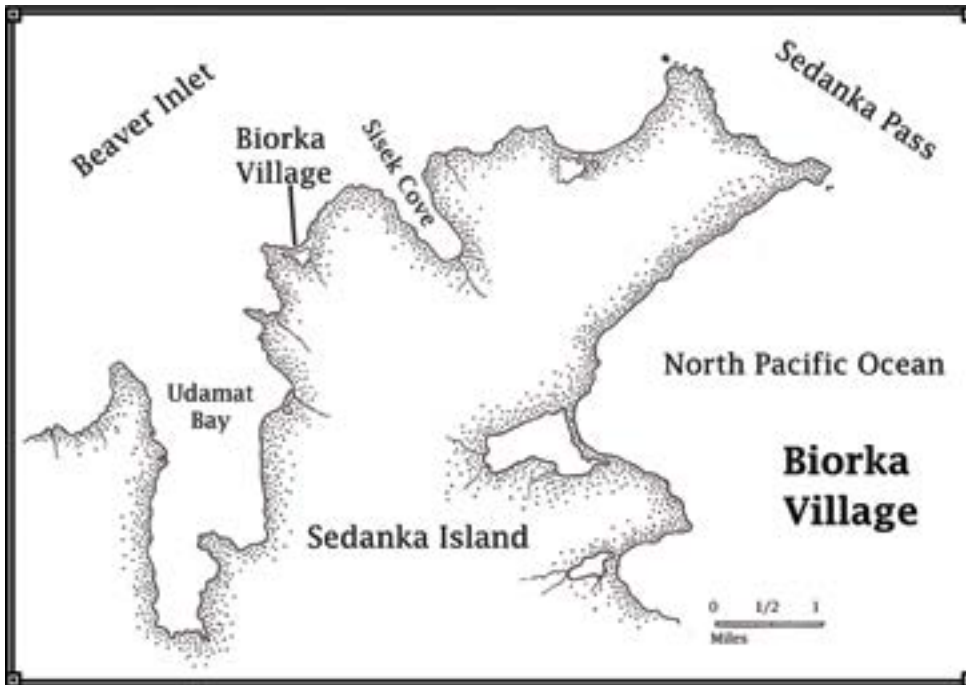
The remaining five groups had boundaries that differed slightly from those of the 18th century. There was a *Sasignan* village at Chichagof Harbor on Attu in the Near Islands—with occasional occupation of a former village on nearby Agattu. The once populous region from Kanaga Island in the west to Amukta Pass in the east was now represented solely by *Niiġuġis* living in a village at Nazan Bay on Atka, a few die-hards who held to the old village in Korovin Bay, and seasonal users of scattered hunting and fishing sites in the Andreanof and Rat islands. The remaining three groups were found in the eastern Aleutians, an area that extends from Amukta Pass, through Umnak, Unalaska, Akutan and Unimak islands to the eastern limit of Unanga territory on the Alaska Peninsula. These people spoke the same basic dialect of Aleut, although there were regional variations. Like the other units, these three had names derived from their respective geographical positions. The *Qawalangin*—a word denoting “a location toward the east”—occupied the area from Amukta Pass eastward to the north side of Unalaska Island. This included Nikolski Village near the southwestern tip of Umnak Island along with Chernofski, Kashega, and Makushin villages on the southwest coast of Unalaska Island. Continuing east, the *Qigiġun* lived from Wislow, on the northwest coast of Unalaska Island, through the Krenitzin Islands. This included Unalaska or Iliuliuk, along with Biorka and Akutan villages. The *Qagaan Tayaġungin*—or “people of the farther east”—inhabited the diverse region east of the Krenitzins, including Unimak Island and the Alaska Peninsula with its adjacent islands.

By 1867 Unanga settlements on St. Paul and St. George in the Pribilof Islands were well established. What began as artificial outposts of transient workers for the Russian-American Company had jelled into permanent and rooted communities by the third decade of the 19th century. The Pribilofs were most closely tied to villages in the eastern Aleutians. Nevertheless, until the mid-20th century when they broke free from repressive government control, their history differed significantly from that of settlements in the Chain. Not unlike the two Pribilof Islands, the two Commander Islands off the coast of Kamchatka had transplanted Unanga settlements. Bering Island had a village primarily composed of people descended from Attu residents, while Atka had been the traditional home of the people on Copper Island.

Biorka Village was located on Sedanka Island. This island is an extension of the southeastern arm of Unalaska Island that forms Beaver Inlet. The two islands are separated by narrow Udagak Strait. Sedanka comprises a little over half of the southern side of Beaver Inlet. This inlet, along with Makushin and Unalaska bays, dozens of smaller bays, protected coves, and deep fjords sculpting the island, give Unalaska the longest coastline of any Aleutian Island. Biorka was originally located beside a lake in a shallow cove at Sedanka’s northwestern tip. In the 20th century, people referred to this location as *Achuuġiġ Tanaġtaqaġ* (“Outer Former Village”).³ The village itself was called *Qakiluġ*. This name was retained when the village moved further inside Beaver Inlet, beyond deep Sisek Cove to a shallow

3 Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 603.

cove at the mouth of Udamat Bay. The name of this cove, *Sidaanaġ*, was derived from the word for graphite which Unangaġ had added to their pigments to give the resulting paint on gut raincoats and other items a glistening appearance.⁴ This name also appears on the western side of Unalaska Island at Sedanka Point, near Kashega Bay. While there in 1761, Ivan Solov'ev, one of the first Russians to visit the area, was given a small amount of "silver dye with sparkles used for coloring faces."⁵



Biorka Village. Map by Ray Hudson.

In the 19th century, the village was often called by a variant of the name of the bay, Sedanka. In the late 20th century, Irene Makarin referred to the "Biorka church house," as *Sedanka kamġaa ulaġ*. The name *Biorka* appeared sometime in the early 19th century. The word is not Unangaġ, and who bestowed it and why remain a mystery.⁶ (Apart from loan words, "B" is not found in *Unangam tunuu*, the Aleut language.) In 1809 the same name was used for an island in Southeast Alaska. Ioann Veniaminov, the great 19th century priest and ethnographer, spelled it "Bor'ka." George Davidson, an early American geologist and cartographer, citing material from Father Innokentii Shaiashnikov in 1867, used "Biorka." Henry W. Elliott called it "Borka" in 1886. The U.S. Bureau of Fisheries recorded "Burka" in 1888, and in the 1890 census Samuel Applegate of Unalaska spelled it "Borka." In 1902 Marcus Baker wrote that it was "now commonly written and pronounced Biorka." He said the name came "from the Norwegian Bjerk

4 Veniaminov, Notes, 96.

5 Ponomarov and Glotov, "The Voyage to Umnak and Unalaska Islands," 62.

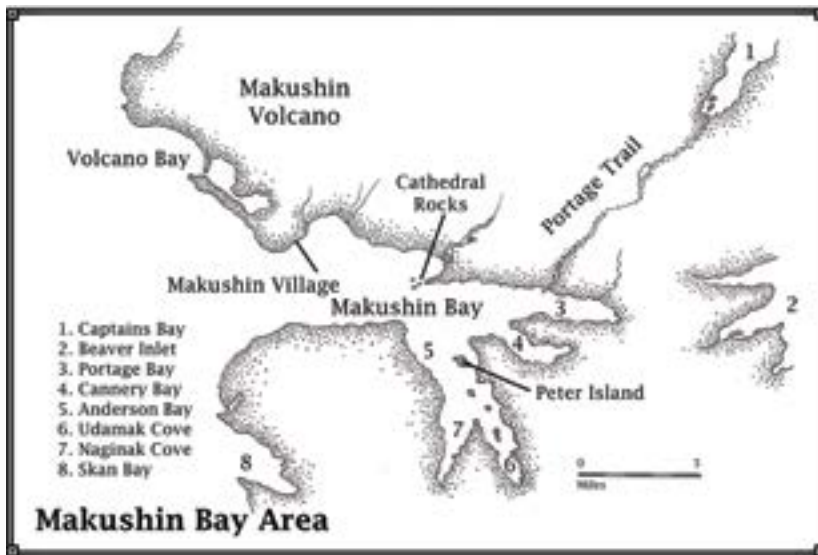
6 Irene Makarin distinguished "Biorka" and "Borka" with the former used for the old village and "Borka" for the more recent site. *The Beginning of Memory*, 200.

Ö or Swedish Björk Ö, meaning *Birch Island*.”⁷ This is either highly unlikely or remarkably inappropriate for a village among islands where there are no trees.

Makushin Volcano, rising 6,680 feet, dominates the broad northwestern arm of Unalaska Island. At the western point of this land mass is Cape Kovrizhka and just south of this is Volcano Bay. Makushin Village was originally located here along a wide beach at the northwestern entrance to Makushin Bay, a vast body of water branching into four other bays and two deep coves. In the 1870s the village was moved inside Makushin Bay, close to where another village had once existed. The new village was called *Ignichiina*.⁸

Variations of the name Makushin appear in early accounts. The suggestion that the name derived from Russian *makushka*, meaning “the top (of the head),” is contravened by its application to the village (and not to the volcano) shortly after contact. The volcano was known as *Ayaġin* and was not called Makushin until the 19th century.⁹ Knut Bergsland suggests *Magusi* may refer to “soaking” or be a reference to the lagoons in the vicinity.¹⁰

Kashega’s name evolved from the Unanga word *Qusii*.¹¹ Veniaminov called the settlement “Koshigi.” Lydia Black emphasized that there is no evidence the name derived from “an alleged Russian surname.”¹² Unlike Biorka and Makushin that were situated at the entrance to large complex bays with numerous villages, Kashega Village was nestled inside its own relatively small bay. This village was one of several along the southwestern coast of Unalaska.¹³ Kashega Bay is framed by McIver Bight on the north and Buck Bight on the south with Buck Island



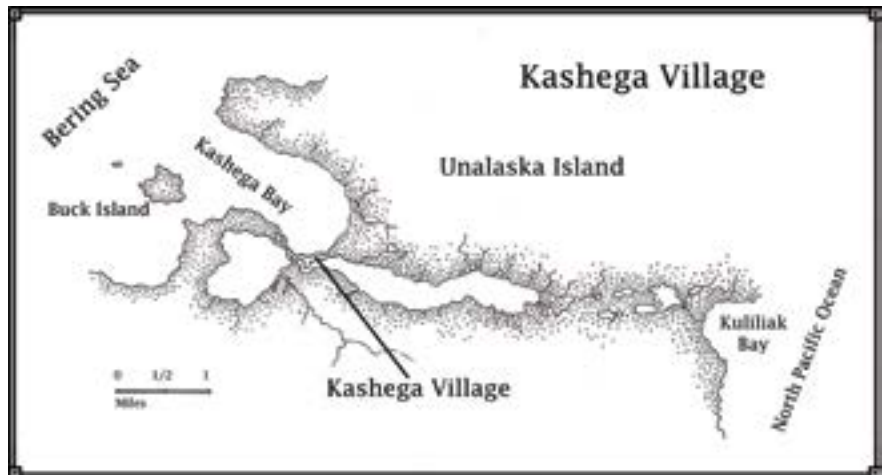
framed by McIver Bight on the north and Buck Bight on the south with Buck Island

Makushin Bay Area.
Map by Rary
Hudson.

- 7 Baker, *Geographic Dictionary of Alaska*, 98.
- 8 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 152.
- 9 The generic terms for volcano, *anġidachalu* and *anġigii*, refer to a mountain with a place for emitting breath or smoke. According to Black’s marginalia in my copy of Sarychev’s *Account of a Voyage*, Nick Galaktionoff said the name of Makushin Volcano recorded on page 60, *Aijagin*, referred to any volcano.
- 10 Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 605, 271.
- 11 Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 607.
- 12 Veniaminov, *Notes*, 40, note **. It was Sarychev who in 1792 was said to have named the location after Yefim Koshigin who wintered at Unalaska in 1763.
- 13 A 1986 survey from Kof Point, at the north entrance to Skan Bay, down to Konets Head at the southern tip of the island, found sixty-two sites (Douglas Veltre, Allen McCartney, and Jean Aigner, *Archaeological Survey*).

between them. Alexander Baranov, the first manager of the Russian-American Company, described Kashega Bay as “one of the worst” on the island because of winds that hurled out of the west-northwest, northwest, north-northwest “and other points of the compass between.”¹⁴ The village was located at the confluence of streams flowing from two fresh water lakes. The larger and more western lake extends into a valley that leads past small streams and freshwater lagoons to Kuliliak Bay on the Pacific side of the island. This low pass effectively cuts Unalaska Island into two topographical sections. North are the precipitous Shaler Mountains that Veniaminov characterized as “high, steep, and impassable.”¹⁵ The terrain to the south moderates into a series of gentle hills.

Although these villages will be explored in detail in the course of this book, it is important to understand at the beginning that they were small settlements throughout the 19th and 20th centuries—small but incredibly tenacious. While their numbers varied, each village retained a sustainable core. It is also important to recognize that these villages never existed in isolation. They were components of the



social, political, and economic complex that formed the eastern Aleutians. More narrowly, each had ties to nearby villages with Biorka associated with villages in the area and in the Krenitzin Islands while Makushin and Kashega were inextricably bound to Chernofski at the southern tip of Unalaska Island.

Kashega Village.
Map by Ray Hudson.

Populations of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin, 1834-1930

	c.1834	1867	1890	1897	1920	1930

1834: Ioann Veniaminov, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District*. 1984:259-260
 1867: George Davidson, *Alaska Territory*. 1869:222.
 1897: C. L. Hooper, *A Report on the Sea-Otter Banks of Alaska*. 1897:27-29.
 1890, 1920, 1930: U.S. Census data

14 Khlebnikov, *Notes on Russian America: Parts II-V*, 120.

15 Veniaminov, *Notes*, 94.

Populations of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin, 1834-1930

Biorka	44	85	57	48	46	22
Kashega	41	69	46	52	51	38
Makushin	35	49	51	71	33	31

1834: Ioann Veniaminov, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalaska District*. 1984:259-260

1867: George Davidson, *Alaska Territory*. 1869:222.

1897: C. L. Hooper, *A Report on the Sea-Otter Banks of Alaska*. 1897:27-29.

1890, 1920, 1930: U.S. Census data

Sources and Difficulties

A satisfactory history of these three villages would include archaeological findings, the collective narratives of the communities, and information about the lives of significant individuals. All three areas present problems. Biorka and Makushin are especially complicated because they were not anchored to specific geographic places. Both villages changed physical locations within historic times and yet retained distinct identities.

Little archaeological work has been carried out at any of the three village sites. Projects have been done in the vicinity of Unalaska Bay—most notably on Amaknak Island and at Reese Bay.¹⁶ However, only preliminary surveys have been made of Beaver Inlet, Makushin Bay, and the southwest coast of Unalaska. Generalities about life in the three villages can be inferred from other locations, but each year more discoveries are made in various sections of the Aleutian Chain and new theories are woven from fragmented data as we struggle to understand how, for at least ten thousand years, people adapted in different ways to a rich and challenging environment. A fuller account of life at Makushin, Kashega, and Biorka will have to await further archaeological research.

Written records about the villages are meager. None was ever the subject of a detailed report. They flourished and declined with little attention from the outside world. The scant information available comes primarily from two sources: first, brief reports submitted to Russian and American officials; and, second, Unanga oral traditions and memories. The difficulty with reports has to do with the need their authors had to impress those in charge, a tendency to brag, and an understandable ignorance about the area. On the other hand, Unanga oral narratives, transmitted over centuries, can be surprisingly faithful to the events or at least to the way the events are encapsulated in the memory of the people. For an example of this, see William Laughlin's discussion of the integrity of the local account of the 1763/64 Medvedev massacre and

16 Dumond, ed. *Archaeology in the Aleut Zone of Alaska*. McCartney and Veltre, "Longhouses of the Eastern Aleutian Islands, Alaska," 249-265.

its confirmation in archaeological findings and historical sources.¹⁷ I say this despite Veniaminov's caveat that although "more or less accurate" such narratives were "embellished by the imagination of the storytellers."¹⁸ The problem with oral narratives centered on Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega is that they come to us, in a sense, once removed from the oral tradition. That they have arrived at all is remarkable and is almost entirely due to Nick Galaktionoff. In his youth he spent time with elders and listened to their stories. Among them were his grandmother, Marva Petukoff of Makushin, and his acquaintances Andrew Makarin (b. 1889) and Alex Ermeloff (b. 1881) of Biorka. It is important to note, however, that traditional inculcation in oral narratives was not part of Nick's childhood training the way it had been for people a generation earlier, such as Makarin and Ermeloff.

William Tcheripanoff of Akutan, born in 1902, explained that a prerequisite to learning traditional lore was an interest on the part of the child. Repetition was a core pedagogical tool. "Before [the age of] ten the adults let the children watch what they are doing," he said.

The mothers give them stories, stories, stories, you know. The father, same way with him.... If he [the child] can't stand it, well, they let him go. They have to have the interest to learn or they don't teach them. That's what my mother used to do to me. During fine weather like this, summer time, I want to play outside but had to sit down inside, in the mud-house, grass, you know. She would hold me on her lap and talk to me, talk to me.... One time I asked her, "Ma, you tell me that story yesterday again." My mother say, "Ya, Bill, you're not going to learn it now, not next year either. By and by, you'll learn it." Now I got it now, see? The same way with my father.¹⁹

Today's elders grew up in the mid-20th century and what passes for traditional knowledge may actually have its roots in published material or in individual memories, rather than in collective village narratives. For example, the erudite Philemon Tutiakoff would sometimes deliver a pronouncement about earlier Unanga practices that, to the uninitiated hearer, might have been mistaken for orally transmitted knowledge when, in fact, he had learned it after reading the 1984 translation of Veniaminov's *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District* or some other scholarly work. On the other hand, the fictional account he wrote about 18th century Unanga has traces of traditional practices that reflect the moral and societal norms of his childhood.

It is appropriate to ask how reliable Nick Galaktionoff was as an informant about the "deep past."²⁰ Reflecting widespread Unanga interest in their history, he met

17 Laughlin, *Aleuts*, 120-126.

18 Veniaminov, *Notes*, 301.

19 Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish One*, 27.

20 Pratt, "Introductory Note," 121.

many of the criteria the anthropologist Ernest S. Burch Jr. set for reliability.²¹ I first met him in 1964 and saw his gradual emergence as an aide to such scholars as Knut Bergsland and Lydia Black. Black used him as a principal informant on several occasions and wrote that he “is believed by others to be the sole surviving authority on ancient whaling lore. The overall time depth of his information extends to six generations...., that is, roughly, to the late 18th century.”²² Marva Petukoff may have incorporated elements of traditional training when she spoke with him; however, the stories Nick conveyed from Makarin and Ermeloff were told to him as an older teenager or young adult. *Unangam tunuu* was Nick’s first language and, in repeated tellings, Nick’s versions of these stories remained consistent. Information emerged gradually, usually following requests around specific topics. Although his interest in what was being said about his people led him to gather information from visiting scholars, when he repeated this information he often prefaced it with an acknowledgment of its source—just as he did when relaying traditional narratives. His virtual blindness excluded reading contemporary publications.

Differing from traditional narratives, the personal recollections so generously provided by Nick and a handful of early 21st century Unanga need to be evaluated the way that all memories are measured: by their internal consistency and in conjunction with other accounts and records.

Writing about specific individuals who lived in these three villages presents its own challenges. We know there were people of renown in the Aleutians before recorded history. Remarkable burials were reserved for them and their families, interments that included mummification. There are accounts that personal relics—a strand of hair, a dollop of saliva—conveyed something of the power of notable elders.²³ While individuals strove to attain fame through travels and victories in war, a deeply rooted reticence prevented bragging or self-promotion. “An Aleut values only the praise and good reputation which others accord him,” wrote Ivan Veniaminov.²⁴ The anonymity treasured by these early residents of the Chain has resisted our best efforts to pry it loose. Thanks to Knut Bergsland and Lydia Black, we have over 160 personal names from the three villages predating the adoption of Russian names. Because these names were frequently derived from the accomplishments of ancestors, a study of them might reveal clues about specific events in the lives of those “long-ago people”—to use a local expression. It was not that the name of an ancestor was given to a child, but rather the name itself reflected a specific event in the ancestor’s life.²⁵ These names, however, were bestowed in context; that is, when an elder named a child he did it only after telling the story surrounding the name. The name became a device for the preservation of history. Lacking the context, the majority of

21 Burch, “The Method of Ethnographic Reconstruction,” 125-129.

22 Black, “Whaling in the Aleutians,” 12.

23 Veniaminov, Notes, 224.

24 Veniaminov, Notes, 184.

25 Veniaminov, Notes, 190. See Bergsland’s carefully annotated translation in *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*, 59-60.

ancient names are intriguing, but ultimately mystifying. We can only wonder what an ancestor of a Kashega chief did to be remembered in 1792 by the name *Qugaġ tunuchġinaġ* (“Made the spirit speak”) or what deeds the ancestor of an old man from Makushin had done to produce the name *Iġanaġ kuchichġinaġ* (“Had the terrible one fished out from boulders”).²⁶ Selected to illuminate one moment in a longer narrative, names were unique and were rarely repeated in succeeding generations. Unangaġ names did not suggest a continuity of spirit; the reincarnation of an ancestor was not conveyed through proper names.²⁷

Beginning in the 19th century, a great many names appear in the birth, baptismal, marriage, and death records of the Orthodox church. Unfortunately, few names can be attached to specific events, continuing the difficulty of telling the story of these villages in personal terms. The best sources for even skeletal accounts are Andrei Grinev’s recent compilation *Kto Est Kto v Istorii Russkoi Ameriki* [*Who’s Who in Russian American History*], published in 2009, and, to a lesser extent, Richard Pierce’s *Russian America: A Biographical Dictionary*, published in 1990. Only in the 20th century, specifically with the efforts to understand the implications of the World War II evacuations, do distinct individuals emerge in village histories.

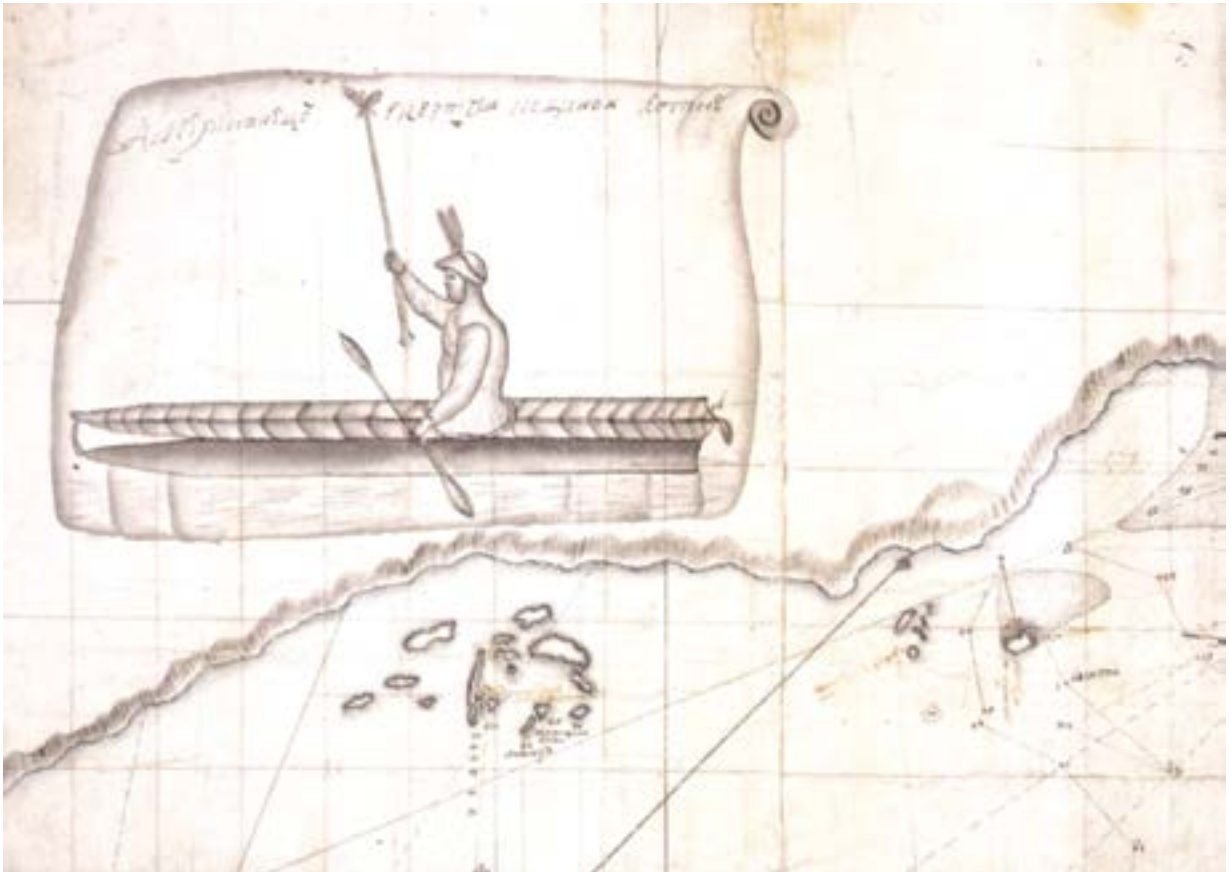
Given the difficulties involved in writing about these three villages, what value could there possibly be in a description of their slow journey to extinction? One answer is in understanding the significant differences between traditional Unangaġ villages and an “urban village” such as Unalaska. In varying degrees, these three villages extended the familial nature of 18th century communities into the 20th century. To describe the small differences that distinguished these three from one another is more difficult than to detail how they differed from Unalaska, the regional center for commerce and religion. And it is this latter difference that is more illuminating. Survivors of these villages, long after the villages had ceased to exist and the residents had moved elsewhere, would proudly identify themselves as Kashega people or Makushin people or Biorka people. Another reason is that the story of these villages expands our understanding of the impact of World War II on Alaska Native communities. A third reason is found in the contributions the last residents made as people today reclaim cultural identifiers and redefine what it means to be Unangaġ in the 21st century. There is no doubt that the handful of survivors from these three lost villages helped shape contemporary Unangaġ identity. They did this by living ordinary lives centered on the seasons, by raising families, by speaking Unangam tunuu, by the traditional skills they practiced and shared, by the ways they met a host of challenges, and by the stories they told their children and grandchildren. The last gift was memory.



Unalaska.

26 Bergsland, *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*, 138, 135..

27 Bergsland, *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*, 64, 63.



Sketch of an "Aleut at Shumagin Island" by Sven Waxell, mate of the *St. Peter* captained by Vitus Jonassen Bering, Second Kamchatka Expedition, 1741. [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org)

Chapter 2 Darkness



Of all the disconcerting statements in Veniaminov’s great work on the eastern Aleutians—and there are several—few are more arresting than his assertion that elderly Unangaġ told of famous shamans who, long before the first Russians appeared, said white people would arrive from the sea and afterwards all Unangaġ would come to resemble them and would adopt their customs. These elders also reported that at the time of the Russian arrival the shamans began prophesizing that “in the east, over their islands,” they saw “a brilliant dawn or a great light” inhabited by “many people resembling the newcomers, while in the lower world, of the people whom they had seen there before, very few remained” and “impenetrable darkness set in.”¹

This darkness surrounds the earliest history of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin.

Nick Galaktionoff joked that when people asked him where Aleuts came from, he would tell them, “Tomorrow I come from Makushin!” By “tomorrow” he meant “yesterday” or “that time before.”

“I was right,” he laughed, “‘cause I was born there.”²

And yet Nick had an older origin story that began when Unangaġ lived on the mainland, a time when ice covered much of the coastline.³ Food became scarce and animals began preying on villages, taking food and attacking people. The chiefs spoke with their people and explained that they would have to go across the ice. They covered the bottoms of their open skin boats with seal skin that still had the fur on it, and this smooth surface allowed the heavily laden boats to be towed. Several thousand people made the journey. As the days went by,

1 Black translated this phrase as “and it had become impenetrably dark there” (Veniaminov, Notes, 219). Here I use the translation Ivan Petroff made for the Tenth Census because of its rhythmic finality.

2 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 120.

3 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 119-120.

the people became hungry. Children began crying. One infant tried nursing, but his mother's breasts were empty since she had not eaten for days. They were starving on the ice. The child's mother took a small piece of seal fat, inserted a stick sideways through it, and gave it to her child who sucked on it and quieted down. Some people died on the ice, but being unable to do anything for them, they were left there.

When people were fishing off the ice in their kayaks, when it was clear weather, they sighted these islands. That's how they knew where the islands were on this side.⁴ The ice eventually started melting. This was way long time ago, Nick said, because now berries grow on these islands. The soil is volcanic and things grew up here gradually. Finally people started making themselves grass and mud houses, underground. The people were happy. The babies started growing bigger.

When family members died, they wrapped them in seal and sea lion skins and put them in a cave. As Nick was telling this story, he mentioned the burial caves on Kagamil, one of the Islands of Four Mountains, and this led to an account of a later time when the Four Mountain Islands acted as barriers between the eastern Unangañ and traditional enemies from the central and western Aleutians. A chief from Unalaska called a meeting of Unalaska and Umnak chiefs. He wanted to station lookouts on the Islands of Four Mountains to watch for intruders from the west. "Because the west people," Nick said, "they don't like us. They want to fight the war with us." Eventually, kayaks arrived from the west, but the people from those islands were starving. By positioning their oars straight up, they signaled that they had arrived unarmed. The local Unangañ rowed out and talked with them. They gave the westerners food but told them to leave. The lookout was kept for years.

Among Nick Galaktionoff's most complete accounts are those which center on Beaver Inlet. The numerous small villages in the inlet were dominated by a village at the east end, near Sedanka Pass, at a location that might very well have been *Qakiluñ* (Biorka Village). "The outside people had seals like sheep," Nick said.⁵ The chief of this village controlled hunting within the inlet from his outpost on top of Old Man Rocks, just beyond Sedanka Pass and off Egg Island. The taller of the two prominent rocks is about 100 feet high and flat-topped and would have provided both safety and a platform for keeping an eye on activities.⁶ "These inside villages had a hard time," Nick said.

They had to have permission from the main village to get their food. These villages would get together and talk about hunting. The chiefs would go to the main village and ask for food or for permission to hunt

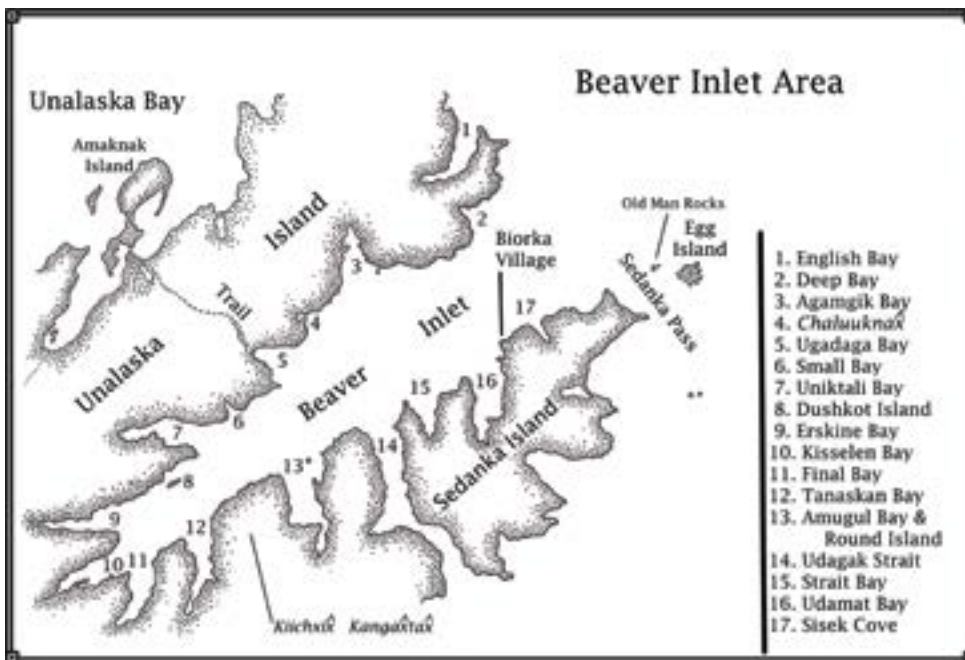
4 That is, this is how people who later lived in more westward islands had knowledge about islands that were to the east. The first Russians to arrive in the Fox Islands were told, with some detail, about islands in the east.

5 Nick Galaktionoff, interview with Ray Hudson, April 2, 1976.

6 "Stories from Andrew Makarin, related by him to Nick Galaktionoff," Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 54-55.

sea lion or whale. Sometimes they would get permission and sometimes they wouldn't. They would request a particular number of whales or seals. Then the leading chief would set a day when they would be allowed into the bay for hunting.⁷

Adding to the chief's power, according to Nick, was the fact that hunters traveled from as far away as Kashega to secure whales. "Whales stayed to the east," he said.⁸ Hunting for either whale or sea lion inside Beaver Inlet involved the preparation of a rope with magical powers. Once permission had been secured, the people—presumably women since making thread and cordage was a task men did not do—began braiding grass into a rope that stretched twice from the beach to the top of a mountain and back down. This mountain, between Amugul and Tanaskan bays, was called *Kiichxī Kangāxtāx̄* [has a rope on top].⁹ When finished, the rope was sufficiently long to stretch across the inlet.¹⁰



Beaver Inlet Area.
Map by Ray Hudson.

When the grass rope was ready, two baidarkas [kayaks] would load up and get ready, and they would set a watch. As soon as they saw something, a sea lion or a whale, come into the bay, the two men in the baidarkas would take off and block that pass with the rope. The grass would rest on the water and nothing could pass under it.

7 "Stories from Andrew Makarin," Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 54-55. Note that this is an edited account and not a literal transcript.

8 Nick Galaktionoff, interview with Ray Hudson, April 2, 1976.

9 Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 603.

10 See Black's discussion of this "ritual" rope in "Whaling in the Aleutians," 16-17, 21.

Nick said that he did not know where the “poisoned” grass was gathered. Bergsland, from additional information supplied by Nick, suggests that female hair was incorporated into the braid.¹¹ This would correspond to the prohibition of a woman approaching the sea during menses or during the mourning period following her husband’s death. If a woman inserted a strand of her hair into the seam of a skin boat covering, it repulsed animals and condemned the hunter to failure.

Nick described a communal whale hunt that relied on the skills of select individuals who practiced ritualistic behavior. “After the pass was blocked, the chiefs would go around and find the best hunters because they couldn’t afford to miss getting the animal,” he said.

“Aleuts planting glass, obsidian, and jade darts in school of humpback whales at Akoon Island, Bering Sea, Alaska.”
H. W. Elliott, 1883.
[National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration](#).
(Hereafter credited as NOAA.)



It might take them two or three days to finish the hunt. The hunter who speared the whale would have to cut the spear out of the animal and leave some of the meat still on the spear. He would cook the meat and fat over an open fire. The hunter would have to eat the meat first. Nobody would touch the whale until the next day to see if that guy was still all right. The reason nobody would touch it until the next day was because the people used poisoned tips for hunting the whale. You couldn’t tell who was using it or what was being used, so they let the hunter eat it first.

These small villages were like families, I think. They would come in and the chiefs would sit down and give orders for dividing the meat.... After butchering the whale, two or three days of partying followed. The second chief would take several men and return to the main chief and

11 Bergsland, Aleut Dictionary, 237.

tell him what had happened—if they got the whale or what. If they didn't get the whale, they would have to report that also. Sometimes if they failed to get the whale they would have to tell what special poisons or weapons they had used.

In Nick's account of the Russian arrival, several events are compressed into a single narrative. A chief told the people that "a different people from somewhere else" would arrive someday. And so the watch in the Islands of Four Mountains continued until, on a clear morning, a ship was sighted coming from the west. The chief sent kayaks to villages across Unalaska Island and east as far as the Peninsula, warning people. Pretty soon, people from Biorka, Akutan, Chernofski, Kashega, Makushin, and other villages arrived.

As the Russian boat approached shore, the chief sent four men to the beach, including one of the second chiefs, while other men hid. The Russian ship dropped anchor. Unangaġ had no word for anchor, so they used the word for a retrieving hook, *qayuġtan achisix*. Four Russians lowered a skiff and as it approached, one of the Unangaġ waved. There was no response. "*Tayaġ kusutuungin*," the Unangaġ said to the second chief, "Angry people." He waved again. This time a Russian, holding a rifle, waved back. After the strangers had landed, misunderstanding led to gunfire. The second chief gave the prearranged signal and the Russians were surrounded. Three were killed and one was brought to the first chief who was pleased, hoping to learn the stranger's language from him. Meanwhile, Unangaġ overpowered the sailors on board the ship, taking a large knife from one of them, but finding nothing on the ship except food. The chief told them to not eat any of the food, but to save the containers and remove the sails, ropes, guns and knives. Then the ship was filled with rocks and sunk.

That Makushin and Kashega played pivotal roles when Russians arrived in the eastern Aleutians is clear from existing reports. With Ivan Solov'ev as his foreman, Stepan Glotov brought the *Julian* to the southern tip of Umnak Island on September 1, 1759, where the vessel was greeted by spears hurled from atlatls. Two of the crew were killed, while Savin Ponomarev, the government representative aboard, and the skipper Glotov were wounded.¹² Nevertheless, Glotov exercised restraint. With the dogged persistence of the early skippers, he began hunting and exploring around Umnak and the southern end of Unalaska Island while cautiously extending friendship. "And through this kindness and friendliness and comradely attitude towards the natives," Ponomarev's 1762 report recorded, "the Russians succeeded, on the two designated islands they had explored, in bringing those natives together with all their companions under the rule of Her Most Powerful Majesty and inducing them to pay the tribute in

12 Umnak oral tradition held that Sasiman was the "name of one of two old men who killed the first Russians who came and anchored inside the reef (outside present Nikolski)." Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 342, citing field notes of Gordon H. Marsh from Afinogen K. Ermeloff and Anton Bezekoff and "Ethnological Notes on the Aleuts" by Charles I. Shade. See also Laughlin, *Aleuts*, 121, for Sasiman as one of the key participants in the attack against the Medvedev party.

furs.”¹³ When Glotov left the islands in late 1762, with over a thousand fox pelts in addition to a healthy cargo of sea otter skins, he had established temporary friendships with two chiefs on Umnak and three on Unalaska.¹⁴ Three Unalaska chiefs were named in the report, two of whom can be identified by village. Umakush was a chief of *Ikalga* (or Chernofski). Siidaḡ [Sedak or Sedan] was chief of the village at *Umsalux* or *Sedankin*, a village just south of Kashega at Sedanka Point. Ponomarev and Glotov understood that Unangaḡ were willing to become Russian citizens, to pay the tribute in furs, and to welcome Russian vessels to their shores. How little they actually understood became clear on Glotov’s next voyage.



Promyshlenniki of the Yeniseysk Governorate, Siberia collecting yasak (tribute—likely sable pelts) from the indigenous people. Painter unknown, 19th century, [The Krasnoyarsk Krai Museum](https://www.krasnoyarsk-museum.ru/).

Promyshlenniki soon arrived in the Fox Islands, creating a notoriety that became the stereotype for all Russian fur hunters: brutal, bestial, selfish, with voracious appetites for women and furs. They showed few if any of those traits that ultimately resulted in friendships and alliances in the Central and Western Aleutians a few years later. Perhaps the most brutal voyage was that of men

- 13 Andreyev, *Russian Discoveries*, 21. Originally, the iasak was a tribute or tax in furs paid to the sovereign by Siberian tribesmen. This duty was laid on Aleuts as they submitted to Russian authority and, in a sense, the success of the collection of the iasak was a reflection of the success of colonization. In 1788 Catherine II abolished iasak collection in the Aleutians and gradually the practice ceased.
- 14 For the names of the chiefs, see Andreyev, *Russian Discoveries*, 21. Makarova wrote that there were 400 Umnak people under the two chiefs and about 300 on Unalaska under the three chiefs. (Makarova, *Russians on the Pacific*, 82, note 128.)

aboard the *Gavriil* from 1760 to 1762 under the merchant Ivan Bechevin and the seaman Gavriil Pushkarev. Even though forty of the promyshlenniks from this vessel were convicted of crimes and sentenced to forced labor, their atrocities produced a prolonged and coordinated offensive attack by Unangă.

Four ill-starred vessels sailed into the eastern Aleutians the next year. Between 1763 and 1764 approximately 166 promyshlenniks died at the hands of outraged Unangă. The best known of these encounters were those involving Petr Druzhinin and his men aboard the *Sv. Zakharii i Elisaveta* at Igunok Bay, known today as Captains Bay, and Denis Medvedev and his crew on the *St. Ioann* at the southern tip of Umnak Island. The slow demise of men aboard the *Sv. Nikolai*, commanded by Luka Nasedkin in Isanotski Strait near the eastern end of Unimak Island, is less documented. The story of the fourth ship, the *Sv. Zhihotvoriashchaia Troitsa* under Ivan Korovin, provides insights into the roles played by Makushin, Chernofski, and possibly Kashega in this coordinated and pivotal encounter between Unangă and Russians.

Korovin had arrived in Makushin Bay by mid-August 1763. Until December he had surveyed the area, divided his men into hunting parties (one for Volcano Bay and one for Konets Head at the extreme southwest tip of the island), taken aboard the interpreter Kaschmak [Qasmax] who had worked earlier with Glotov, and exchanged letters with Druzhinin and Medvedev. On December 8 an Unangă woman warned of an impending attack. On the same day three men from Druzhinin's ship arrived over the mountains with news of their defeat. Soon seventy armed warriors affirmed both stories.

Unangă attacks at Captains Bay and Umnak employed similar tactics. Several bundles of choice furs, bound with tightly knotted cords, were carried to the Russian camps. Either while the Russians struggled to untie the knots or after they had set aside the knives used to loosen the bindings, Unangă struck. At Captains Bay two local men were killed before all the Russians were annihilated near the small stream where they had hoped to winter. Among the details that Alex Ermeloff told Nick Galaktionoff were these: after the Russians were killed, Unangă stormed the ship, poured flour and other provisions overboard while saving the emptied sacks, wooden boxes, knives, axes and anything made from iron. One man attempted to salvage the ship's anchor, but it wouldn't budge. Six baidarkas were used to tow the vessel into deeper water where it was destroyed.¹⁵

Druzhinin died in the first skirmish at Captains Bay. His men who were camping in small groups in nearby villages and coves were hunted out and killed. From among the men camped in Beaver Inlet, six escaped and made their way to Kalekta Bay only to discover the signs of another rout. For several months these Russians lived a precarious existence above the hills of Captains Bay, assisted by an Unangă. Eventually launching a crude baidar, Druzhinin's men skirted the

15 Nick Galaktionoff, personal conversation with Ray Hudson, August 27, 1991.

northern shore of the island and took refuge in a cave near Makushin Bay until the end of March 1764, when they were united with their countrymen aboard Korovin's vessel.

"Scene of the Conflict between Promyshlenik & Natives on the Island of Umnak & Unalaska from 1763-1765" *History of Alaska, 1730-1885* by Hubert Howe Bancroft. Repository: Loussac Library, Anchorage.



From December 1763 to the end of April, Korovin and his men rebuffed occasional attacks that confined them to the Makushin Bay area where their vessel had been beached. In late April, with the vessel now in the water, they fled under strong winds that turned on them and two days later drove the *Troitsa* ashore on the northeast side of Umnak. Torn by harsh winds and facing incessant attacks, they made their slow way south, hoping to join Medvedev's party. They arrived in late July and found all of their compatriots dead.

The Unanga attacks had been successful. People might have expected to return to lives centered on the sea. Summer had arrived with incoming salmon. There would be sea lions, seals, and sea otters to hunt. A shaman might discern through dreams the location of a beached whale. The women would harvest the long luxuriant stalks of beach grass for mats and baskets. Salmonberries and blueberries and that true berry, the moss berry, would ripen again.¹⁶ The year would provide time for women to repair or replace the intricately sewn and embroidered clothing of the village. Driftwood could again be bent into bowls and shaped into the hats that were lavishly painted. Stone, bone and ivory could

16 Referring to the mossberry (*Empetrum nigrum*), Veniaminov noted, "The Aleuts pick and preserve only these berries for the winter." Notes, 25. Because the berry does not tear on picking, it can be preserved by immersion in water or oil. See also Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company*, 499, note 21.

be carved into lamps, spear points, needles, bushings for the wooden frames of the skin boats, amulets, images of the deity. Enemies would certainly come once more: Koniags from the east, marauding bands of disaffected Unangaꝯ.

Yet who should arrive again but Stepan Glotov. In July 1764 he returned to the Fox Islands on the *Sv. Andreian i Natal'ia* after having spent a difficult time at Kodiak Island. At Umnak he rescued Korovin and other surviving Russians. Then in September Ivan Solov'ev appeared at Unalaska on his own vessel, the *Sv. Petr i Pavel*. The two skippers learned first hand of the effective assaults. Previous friendships proved transient when Chief Siidaꝯ from Umsalux was apprehended by Solov'ev in late September 1764 after a brief skirmish in which four Unangaꝯ were killed. This chief had been among those whom Glotov had counted as submissive to Russia in 1762. A few days later, upon the arrival of Korovin and fearing his revenge, the chief's men unsuccessfully attempted to free him and six of them were killed. In October Solov'ev released him on the condition that he leave his son as hostage.

Near the beginning of November 1764, Solov'ev reconnoitered the shores of Makushin Bay in the vicinity where Itꝯaadaꝯ, also identified as a chief of Chernofski, and Qagumaga, the chief of Makushin, along with one hundred eighty villagers were hunting migrating fur seals.¹⁷ Winter was approaching and seal migrations were practically over. Having left their breeding grounds on northern islands (the Pribilof Islands) known to Unangaꝯ but so far hidden by fog and distance from the foreign hunters, the seals would supply villagers with food, oil, and material for clothing and tools. In late spring or early summer the fur seals would once again seek out Aleutian passes as they swam north from warmer waters. In decades to come, government officials would attempt to curb or halt the hunting of fur seals by men from Chernofski, Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka.

At the approach of winter, green had gone from all but the most protected valleys and snow had started its uneven descent down the mountains surrounding Makushin Bay. The landscape was acquiring the starkness of rock and crushed grass as Itꝯaadaꝯ and Qagumaga escorted the Russians to Makushin Village (Magusiꝯ) which had a “hot spring below the sea mark, which is only to be seen at ebb tide.”¹⁸ Later Qagumaga led Solov'ev to another village at Reese Bay, most of whose people fled at their approach. The Russians summarily appropriated this settlement, set up camp, destroyed three hundred hunting spears and ten rare bows and arrows used in war, and seemed surprised when that brave man Inghluuguzaꝯ leading over two hundred villagers returned and attacked. Nineteen Unangaꝯ were killed, including Inghluuguzaꝯ himself—“one of their

17 Whenever possible the spelling of Unangaꝯ names has been coordinated with the spelling in Bergsland's *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*.

18 Coxe, *Account of the Russian Discoveries*, 137. Also, J. L. S., *Neue Nachrichten*, 37. Information on the 1763-1766 conflicts was also provided by Lydia T. Black in a series of lectures at Unalaska in 1985.

leaders, and the most inveterate fomentor of hostilities against the Russians.”¹⁹ In this skirmish the secondary chief Agaladok was captured and his release made conditional on surrendering his son as a hostage. And then Solov’ev had urged Agaladok to be cooperative. To be cooperative and submissive were not attributes It̄aadāx cherished, but by the end of January he had agreed with Qagumaga to increase the tribute in furs paid to Solov’ev. Shortly after that Qagumaga and other Unalaska chiefs “with a great number of their relatives” made further overtures of cooperation and friendship.

Russians called these early chiefs *toions*, extending a Kamchatkan term to cover a position known as *tukux* by the people themselves. The best description of their positions dates from the 1830s—almost sixty years later. Veniaminov characterized early Unangāx villages as generally small collections of related individuals led by paternal figures whose main duty was to keep the boundaries of the villages inviolate. As Nick Galaktionoff suggested, these small villages were like families. The chiefs were expected to work like other men, were not given dictatorial powers nor extended overt honors. Nevertheless, to insult or injure them was to invite retribution from villagers. The chief was assisted by a secondary chief and backed by elders of the village; indeed, early observers noted that whereas little deference was paid to chiefs the elders were always held in high esteem. A loose confederacy of villages sharing familial ties was headed by a paramount chief with powers analogous to village chiefs but whose leadership was essential for wars and major hunting expeditions. He received tribute from his subordinate villages and was the only leader who accumulated riches from his position. From the scant historical records it is impossible to accurately categorize leaders like It̄aadāx within this hierarchy of chiefs.

We do not know the name of the chief from Kashega. He may have been among those who made peace with the Russians. One argument for this is the fact that Solov’ev soon established his headquarters at this location. It̄aadāx, unlike other chiefs, refused to reconcile with the intruders and all winter eschewed contact with the Russians. The confederacy that had eliminated one hundred sixty Russians and destroyed their vessels was coming apart. Siidāx and Inghluuguzāx had attacked, but Inghluuguzāx was dead and Siidāx, with his son as hostage, was wavering. Qagumaga and others were attempting reconciliation with the Russians.

Winter in the Chain intensifies after January. During the months when nothing grew, the months called Earlier and Later Famine,²⁰ scurvy decimated the Russians camped at Kashega Bay. Between the middle of March and the end of May twenty men died and so many others were debilitated that only a dozen could defend themselves. From off shore, It̄aadāx surveyed the camp from his

19 Coxе, *Account of the Russian Discoveries*, 139. J. L. S., *Neue Nachrichten*, 139. Solov’ev said Inghluuguza (was responsible for the attacks on Druzhinin and Korovin (Black lecture).

20 Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 574. Several variations exist for the names of months.

iqyaġ [kayak], always staying far enough away to avoid a direct confrontation until May 27, 1765, when he was intercepted by armed Russians and escorted to Solov'ev's presence. Although Solov'ev deduced that the chief had planned to surprise his guards and burn his vessel, he nevertheless set him free in a week with the exhortation "to desist from hostilities."²¹ To assure that the people did not attack, Solov'ev again destroyed all spears, bows and arrows, and skin boats he could find. Solov'ev saved one bow to send to St. Petersburg in 1766 as part of an ethnographic collection. This may be the only Unangaġ bow in Russian collections and one of very few in existence.²²

That summer Itġaadaġ watched the Russians regain their strength. By mid-July enough were back on their feet to enable the skipper to pilot two open boats around the northern end of the island. He entered the large complex body of water later known as Unalaska Bay. On his way, he continued his preemptive destruction of weapons and boats. Among groups of people fishing for salmon in the various streams flowing into Unalaska Bay he found the villagers from Uknadax (Hog Island) and from a village belonging to Chief Imaginak (*Umġasingan*, later Imagnee, at Morris Cove). Solov'ev continued along the shore in a northeasterly direction, passing two wide bays, until he reached the deep north-facing Kalekta Bay. Here where a stream flows across abundant clam beds on one of the few sandy beaches on Unalaska Island he was greeted by sixty men and one hundred seventy women and children.²³ Encouraged by this favorable reception, reassured by his extensive destruction of weapons, Solov'ev returned to his headquarters at Kashega and outfitted a hunting party under his foreman Gregorii Korenev. Leaving for Kalekta Bay on September 19, 1765, the Russians distributed fox traps to Itġaadaġ and Qagumaga in Makushin Bay. Itġaadaġ accepted them, perhaps knowing that those who had appeared so friendly a short time ago would now meet the Russians with hostilities. Indeed, on November 1, twenty-six Unangaġ were killed in an attack against the Russians at Kalekta.²⁴

On January 19, 1766, Chief Itġaadaġ summoned a band of warriors and launched a raid against Solov'ev. The chief and fourteen of his men were killed.²⁵ Solov'ev's response was systematic and brutal. He continued to destroy weapons and boats in villages on Unalaska and thus extinguished the people's abilities to defend or feed themselves.²⁶ It is alleged that following the burning of one fortified village he had two hundred bodies tossed into the sea and that he sank two large open boats of people traveling to visit relatives. One of the most notorious attacks conducted under Solov'ev involved people living in Beaver Inlet, very probably residents of Biorka Village. Several villages had escaped to Egg Island,

21 Coxe, *Account of the Russian Discoveries*, 142.

22 Black, *Aleut Art*, 132.

23 Coxe, *Account of the Russian Discoveries*, 143.

24 Coxe, *Account of the Russian Discoveries*, 144. J. L. S., *Neue Nachrichten*, 145.

25 Coxe, *Account of the Russian Discoveries*, 145. J. L. S., *Neue Nachrichten*, 145, refers to "the perfidious Itchadak."

26 Black, "Early History," 94-95.

off Sedanka Island. Twice the Russians attacked and on their second assault they broke through. The slaughter that followed was general: men, women and children. This accusation, however, is suspect because Solov'ev left no record of traveling that far east. He sent his foreman Gregorii Korenev to Beaver Inlet and the deeds of this man may have devolved upon his skipper. Veniaminov wrote that oral tradition maintained that "Solov'ev himself did not cause as many Aleuts to perish as his companions who were on neighboring islands."²⁷ It was in the Krenitzen Islands that a promyshlennik, displeased that a girl had eaten his piece of whale meat, cut open her stomach. Another Russian, according to Veniaminov, "threw from cliffs, slashed with a knife (which he always carried with him) and used an axe handle on some unfortunate Aleuts for no other reason than for having dared to look at his mistress (who died only in 1838)."²⁸ Berkh, who attempted to clear Solov'ev's name of the horror associated with it, wrote in 1823:

Most of those guilty of murdering the Russians paid with their lives. The avengers hearing later on that the islanders, afraid of a surprise attack, had gathered three hundred strong in a fortified dwelling went there at once. The islanders began to shoot arrows from apertures, but receiving bullets in return, they decided to barricade all the openings and wait quietly for their fate. Solov'ev, seeing that this building could not be breached easily, put intestines filled with powder under it and blew these unlucky children of nature into the air. Many escaped after the explosion, but were cut down with guns and sabers.²⁹

As rival merchants sought to discredit competitors, it was advantageous to portray others as cruel and exploitative of the local population, a stance at odds with the government's policy. Thus the most notorious example of Solov'ev's cruelty—the summary and capricious execution at Kashega of nine Unangañ whom, with three others, he is accused of binding one behind the other to determine the force of a single musket shot—is probably apocryphal. Black wrote that this charge was a favorite one employed by 18th century writers.³⁰ Martin Sauer, writing in 1802, supported this accusation against Gregori Shelikhov at Kodiak.³¹ The charge against Solov'ev predates Sauer's and appears in a complaint made by Unangañ of the Unalaska District on June 7, 1789, but this is still a quarter of a century after the event was said to have happened.³²

By the time the Russian-American Company received its monopoly in 1799, the malfeasance of promyshlenniks was fixed in mythology if not in fact. Perhaps these stories of unmitigated cruelty were of some comfort to people suffering the repression of a domineering commercial firm. Veniaminov, writing over a

27 Veniaminov, Notes, 252. See also Black's footnote in Notes, 96-97, note *.

28 Veniaminov, Notes, 255.

29 Berkh, *A Chronological History*, 41.

30 Black, note *, in Veniaminov, Notes, 252.

31 Sauer, *An Account of a Geographical and Astronomical Expedition*, appendix VII, footnote.

32 Dmytryshyn, Crownhart-Vaughn, and Vaughn, *Russian Penetration*, 369.

half-century after the events of the 1760's, referred to "those dreadful times" and to the "cruel acts against the Aleuts."³³ Glotov is accused of destroying the inhabitants of Samalga Island and the Islands of Four Mountains where, on Chuginadak, he reportedly killed the men and left the women to starve or to move to Umnak. He also destroyed the villages on the southern side of Umnak. The people of Carlisle, again according to Veniaminov, were destroyed by Glotov at the request of the people of Umnak. These were undoubtedly years of intense turmoil not only between Russians and Unangaġ but among groups of Unangaġ as well. Not all the people of the Islands of Four Mountains were killed, however. Enough remained to offer resistance to Afanasii Ocheredin in 1766 and to other skippers a bit later.³⁴



During his last voyage to the Aleutians, which began in 1771, Solov'ev set up headquarters, not at Kashega, but at the deep and protected harbor on the north side of Unalaska Island where Druzhinin had camped. Here he established a base for fur hunting operations. Although hostilities continued and Unangaġ boasted, "We will kill all of you too, as we have already killed many Russians in the past,"³⁵ the outpost attracted more Russians and became consolidated. In the autumn of 1774 a vessel commanded by Dmitri Bragin arrived and a period of calm began. In early summer, 1775, Solov'ev readied his vessel for sailing home. He distributed gifts to people who had collected at the harbor and urged them to keep peace with Russian ships.³⁶ In succeeding decades, this first permanent Russian outpost in Alaska became the settlement of Iliuliuk, the village of Unalaska.

"View of Shelekov's Establishment on the Island of Kodiak" by Martin Sauer. From *Expedition to the Northern Parts of Russia*, 1802. Repository: Loussac Library, Anchorage.

The years of overt hostility were over. Starvation and diseases exacerbated the violent conflicts between Russians and Unangaġ. We do not know with any certainty how many Unangaġ perished during the two decades that began with Solov'ev and Glotov's arrival and ended with Solov'ev's departure. When Glotov first hunted near Kashega and Makushin, he found it difficult to estimate of the number of people because "the island was very large and its residents moved from one location to another."³⁷

33 Veniaminov, Notes, 251.

34 Black, Atka, 44.

35 Masterson and Brower, Bering's Successors, 83.

36 Masterson and Brower, Bering's Successors, 84.

37 Smith, J. L., ed., The Russian Discovery of the Aleutian and Kodiak Islands, 62.

Oral traditions had placed twenty-two villages on the island when the Russians arrived.³⁸ Given the number of village sites that even incomplete archaeological surveys have suggested, that number is small unless it refers to self-identifying communities and not to the proliferation of seasonal and shifting locations where they lived. Whatever the magnitude of loss, Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin had survived the conflagration that had consumed so many of their neighbors. For them, for the time being, the shamans who had predicted the absorption of Unanga into another way of life were wrong.

38 Veniaminov, Notes, 90.



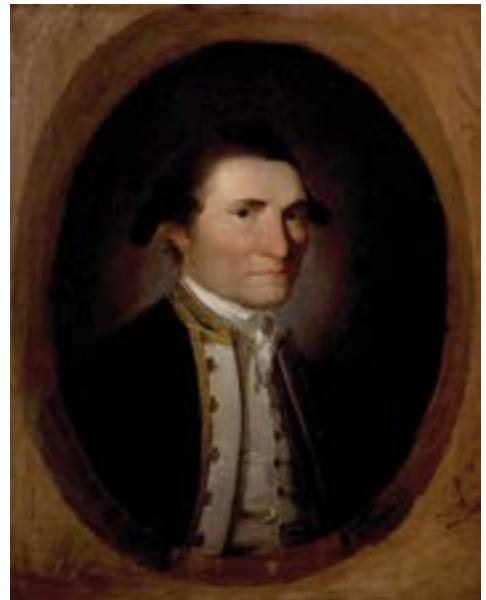
"A Woman of Unalaska wearing a tubular cloak and standing on the top of a house." Watercolor by John Webber, July 1778. Courtesy British Library. Reference no: Add.Ms.15514 f.15. Record no.: C3119-0.

Chapter 3 Respite



The best accounts of conditions in the Chain for the years immediately after Solov'ev's departure center in the vicinity of Biorka.

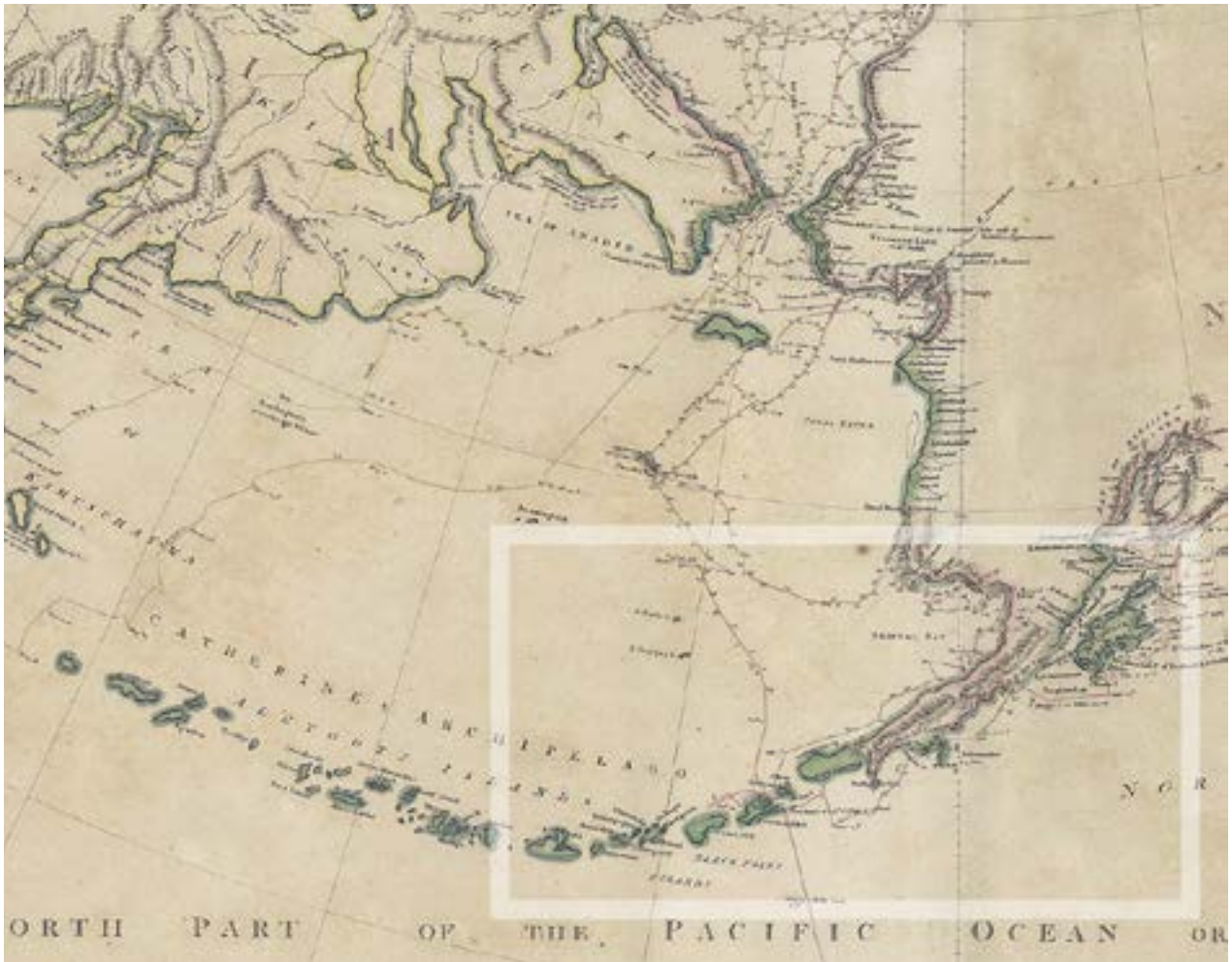
They are found in journals kept during the two occasions James Cook anchored his ships off Beaver Inlet in 1778. The deaths of stalwart chiefs like It'aaada' and Inghluuguza' led Unanga' leaders to abandon hostilities, to accept the inexorable arrival of Russians, and to recognize the inevitability of coexistence with foreigners. On their part, organizers of fur gathering expeditions realized that the more Unanga' leaders they could recruit or groom the better were their chances when it came to securing hunters. Skilled Native hunters had become essential with the decrease in animal populations that accompanied the multiplication of hunting expeditions. The first economic boom had begun. Cook's visits suggest that Unanga' life had entered a brief period of stability in which competition among companies allowed a degree of political and economic independence during a time of comparative calm and prosperity. This brief respite preceded the gradual emergence of the Russian-American Company. A century later, conditions were paralleled during the years between the sale of Alaska in 1867 and the growing dominance of the Alaska Commercial Company in the 1870s.



Portrait of James Cook with false, painted frame by John Webber, n.d., National Portrait Gallery, London.

By late June 1778 Cook had brought the *Resolution* and the *Discovery* up the northwest coast of North America, down the Alaska Peninsula, and along the southern side of the Krenitzin Islands. On the morning of June 27, he approached

Unalga Pass in thick fog. The moment shallow water was detected, the anchors were dropped. As the fog gradually lifted, the men's astonishment rose. They had sailed between two high pinnacles, narrowly missing disaster. Several men recorded astonishment in their journals. Cook wrote, "The Island we were now at I called *Providence* from the providential escape we had in first making it."¹ Once he learned the local name, however, he began using that.



Detail from "Chart of the N.W. Coast of America and the N.E. Coast of Asia, Explored in the Years 1778 and 1799," showing Cook's route west along the Alaska Peninsula, to Unalaska, and returning east. London, Wm. Faden, Geographer to the King, Charing Cross. 2nd edition, January 1, 1794. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

In the Aleutian Islands, the beginning of summer resembles the beginning of spring elsewhere. Yellow thick-necked cowslips crane out of swamps. Deep blue violets and white stalked hyacinths crouch in thick-bladed grass as it inches its way above the crushed and bleached remnants of previous years. Within weeks the arrogant wild rye, beach grass, overpowers everything along the shores and lower hills. This was the time whales migrated north, and, as Cook brought his ships around the northern tip of Sedanka Island into the mouth of Beaver Inlet,

¹ Beaglehole, Journals, Vol. III, Part One, 390, n.2.

men in baidarkas were towing two whales toward a village.² The wind slackened and the ships dropped anchor. A few men in *iqyaġ* and *uluġtaġ* (one- and two-hatch kayaks) approached to make hesitant exchanges with the sailors. “They rather seemed shy,” Cook wrote, “and yet seemed to be no strangers to Vessels in some degree like ours, and had acquired a degree of politeness uncommon to Indians.”³ Had he known their recent history, he would have been astounded that they approached at all.



After spending the night at anchor, the ships entered Unalga Pass the next morning. Sighting a harbor off the south side of the channel and needing fresh water, they attempted to enter but wind and tide drove them beyond its entrance. While Cook and Charles Clerke, second in command, struggled to keep their ships from being swept back through the pass, Unangaġ deftly maneuvered around the vessels in their kayaks. The ships dropped anchor just outside the harbor until the rush of tide was over. Before noon the rowboats began towing the vessels into the long narrow bay Unangaġ called *Samgan udaa*.⁴ After Cook's departure, Russians referred to the bay as *Anglinskaia Bukhta* or English Bay.

There was no village in the bay. Nevertheless, curious Unangaġ arrived. Four of the Englishmen hired a guide for a few leaves of tobacco to take them to a settlement. The men included the assistant surgeon David Samwell, Lieutenant

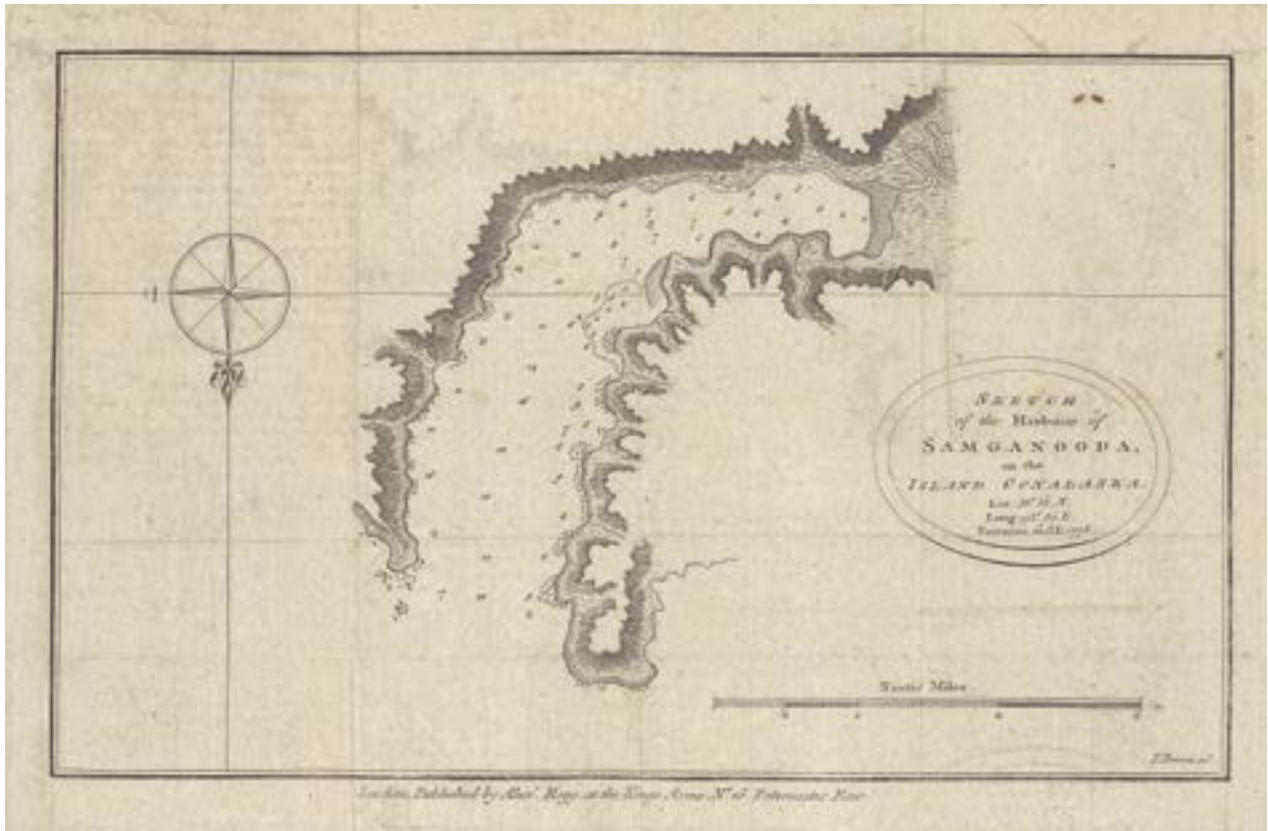
Enlarged view of highlighted selection on chart, preceding page, showing the islands from Kodiak to Atka. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

2 See Elliott's description and drawing of whaling in this vicinity a century later in *Our Arctic Province*, 152-153.

3 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 390.

4 Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 602-603. Possibly “bay of snouts.” Udaa means “bay” in Aleut.

John Gore, and John Webber, the official expedition artist. The fourth participant may have been William Ellis, the surgeon's mate aboard the *Discovery*, who left drawings that probably date from this excursion. Lieutenant King, although not part of this group, wrote that the village was "over the hills on the East side of the harbour." Leaving English Bay on July 4, the men climbed a steep but frequently used trail for about a mile and a half. A map prepared at this time shows a break in the mountainous terrain on the east side of the bay that may have been their route as it corresponds to a ravine that reaches the crest of the ridge before descending into Deep Bay in Beaver Inlet.⁵



Sketch of the Harbour of Samganooda on the Island Oonalaska "English Bay." Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

The village they visited and the small bay where it was located were both called *Uuchuyuuux*, a name that may have been related to the sucking currents in nearby waters.⁶ Russians called the village *Bobrovskoye*, using the same word they applied to the entire inlet. The English, not knowing what to look for, saw no sign of a village other than a few people milling about and large numbers of split fish drying on racks.

⁵ Joppien and Smith, *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages*, 195.

⁶ Bergsland, *Aleut Dictionary*, 603. Clerke said Unanga{ called the village "Se'zar'nuck" (Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 1334).



In Webber's drawings the slopes bordering the bay are crusted with rocky outcroppings. The foreground has low grass and tall flowering plants that are probably lupine although the leaves more resemble those of monkshood. In one of Ellis's drawings, the ground cover is even lower than what is shown in Webber's sketch. Samwell's only comment apart from noting "a few low Bushes of underwood here & there" was that "the Hills present nothing but barrenness being covered with wild Heath only & that not every where." Samwell and the others saw men busy near the shore. An upright kayak rested on the ground while another leaned on its side against a post. A third was raised upside down between two sets of curved driftwood supports, the bow and stern resting where the curved pieces touched. These were all single hatched, as was a kayak being carried ashore by two men on either side of the hatch. The *iqyaġ* was light and could be easily carried by a single person, and so this one was probably weighted with fish. Although Samwell referred specifically to halibut, the fish drying may also have included cod and perhaps even early salmon. When dried they were stuffed into sea lion stomachs. Nick Galaktionoff said that after being prepared, the sea lion stomachs were thoroughly dried, rolled and put away until needed when they were softened by soaking for two or three days. These containers were strong and could be jumped on in order to pack in around two hundred fish.⁷

"Natives of Oonalashka and their Habitations." This 1790 engraving was made for Bankes' *New System of Geography*, published by royal authority. While based on John Webber's original work, this engraving was reversed for the original publication. It has been corrected here. Image courtesy Francis Broderick.

7 Nick Galaktionoff, interview with Ray Hudson, April 1, 1976.

In his sketches, Webber detailed a circular fish net on a pole, the netting probably made from fine sinew with which Unangaꝯ made exceptional cordage. A gut raincoat was draped over a fish rack to dry, and a net covered rectangular frame rested near the ground. As the English approached the beach, the path terminated at the top of a knoll where people were resting. The women stood back, but the men came forward, greeted them with polite bows, and gestured toward a pole that rose from a square hole. Samwell was “much surprized” at finding himself on top of a dwelling. There were seven or eight of these communal homes at Deep Bay. “We descended down a Ladder made of a thick piece of wood with steps cut in it,” Samwell wrote in his journal, “into a dark & dirty Cave seemingly under ground...” He provided a detailed description of the dwelling while Webber made preliminary sketches from which he later prepared a drawing that became the famous engraving “The Inside of a House, in Oonalashka.” From these we get a fairly detailed description of what dwellings at Biorka would have been like.

Briefly, the Unangaꝯ home, *ulaꝯ* or *ulaagamax* (or *barabara* as it came to be called by the Russians and subsequent visitors to the islands), was a large, multi-family dwelling. A frame of whale ribs and driftwood was erected in a rectangular pit, dug about three feet into the ground. Dried fresh grass was laid over the frame and this was covered with sod. Two overhead openings provided the only light in the structures. One opening held the notched log used as a ladder while the other was opened for ventilation. A central passage way was surrounded by living quarters. Individual family areas were separated with grass matting. Above each apartment were frame and mat covered lofts for storage. Only archaeological research will reveal the extent to which the dwellings at Deep



“The Inside of a House, in Oonalashka,” by John Webber. Tinted engraving courtesy Francis Broderick.

Bay and Biorka shared characteristics with those complex structures recently unearthed at other sites.

Webber's interior drawings included bentwood containers with sinew and wooden handles, extended and rolled-up mats, bundles of grass, and what may be sea lion or seal stomachs used for storage of oil or dried fish. There were a number of grass baskets (including one partially folded fish basket) and a raincoat draped over a pole. With one curious exception, no fishing or hunting weapons were included in any drawing, nor did Webber sketch any bentwood visors or full crowned hats although both were observed and collected. A drawing of the inside of a barabara by William Ellis may show two open crowned visors stored over the end of a post. The exception in the depiction of implements or weapons is mystifying. What appears to be a strung bow hangs on a post on the left in one drawing. The English were emphatic about the absence of any offensive weapons (not realizing, of course, the effectiveness of the sea otter and whale spears if an offensive weapon were needed). Bows and arrows were primarily restricted to warfare. This small bow, however, does not resemble the weapon drawn by Levashov in 1768 or that in the collection of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in Leningrad.⁸ It may represent the type of bow that formed part of a fox trap (*chalkanaĕ*).⁹ It may be the handle of a bentwood bowl being slowly dried into shape. It may, however unlikely, have been a child's toy.



"Man of Unalaska" by Captain Mikhail Levashov, 1768. From an atlas of drawings by M.S. Levashov in the Hydrographic Section, Ministry of Marine, Petrograd. Image courtesy Francis Broderick.

Webber's drawings inside the barabara are remarkable, especially since they were done with little light. "They are rather dark," Samwell wrote about the dwellings,

⁸ Liapunova, Essays, 28, 102.

⁹ Bill Tcheripanoff and Sergie Sovoroff in Hudson, ed., Unugulu{ Tunusangin, Oldtime Stories, 151-152.



"A Woman of Unalaska," by John Webber (original sketch). Museum of the Aleutians.

“having no light but what comes by the Door or Hatchway.” Unangaġ had lamps, of course, and eventually the English would write about them, but for this visit they chose to keep their visitors in the dark.

More than anyone else, Cook is responsible for portrayals of Unangaġ as a conquered people, a population of slaves. He referred to “the great subjection the Natives are under” and called them “the most peaceable inoffensive people I ever met with.”¹⁰ Webber’s Unalaska drawings, at once perceptive and Arcadian, contribute to this view twenty years after the first Russians arrived. A closer examination of the expedition’s journals and drawings suggests something else. As the four men returned from Deep Bay and reached the crest of a hill overlooking English Bay, they met a man and a woman. While he may have been the subject of one of Webber’s drawings, she definitely was. Several drawings of her exist, one of which was later engraved and is known as “A Woman of Oonalashka.” In the drawings and engraving, although positioned for a three-quarters portrait, she has turned her eyes to confront the viewer with assurance, curiosity and humor. The impression this “very beautiful young Woman” made on the hikers is reflected in her portrait and in Samwell’s journal. “We were all charmed with the good nature & affability with which she complied with our Wishes in staying to have her picture drawn,” he wrote,

& with what readiness she stood up or sat down according as she was desired, seeming very much pleased in having an opportunity to oblige us. She was withal very communicative & intelligent & it was from her I learnt that the Name of the Harbour where the Ships lie is Samgoonoodha. We gave her Husband all the Tobacco we had about us, and made her a present of Beads & other Trinkets with which she was well pleased, & so we took our leave of them, highly delighted with our short Excursion, more particularly with the affable & obliging behaviour of this beautiful & truly good natured young Woman.¹¹

There are variations among the drawings, but in each the woman is tattooed across the cheeks and from the lower lip to the chin. She wears an assortment of jewelry: earrings, a necklace, a circle of beads from the septum of the nose, and an elaborate “winged” labret. Her hair is cut in bangs above the eyebrows, hangs to just below the ears, and is gathered at the back of her head in a type of figure-eight. In 2001 the original sketch, “A Woman of Unalaska,” returned permanently to Unalaska. Purchased from an auction house in Sydney, Australia, the drawing



An engraving based on John Webber’s original sketch “A Woman of Unalaska.” Image courtesy Francis Broderick.

10 Beaglehole, Journals, Vol. III, Part One, 458, 459.

11 Beaglehole, Journals, Vol. III, Part Two, 1124-1125.

was acquired by the Museum of the Aleutians through the generosity of business firms, the Ounalashka Corporation, and individuals.

Although Cook himself left no account of meeting this woman, he was impressed by the bearing of an older woman whom he saw during a walk on the beach at English Bay. "There was a middle aged woman among them," he wrote after seeing a group of people enjoying a meal of fresh halibut, "of such a mien as would at all times and in all places command respect." While everyone else was dressed in gut raincoats and bird skin parkas, she wore a "seal skin" parka trimmed with fur fringes to which puffin beaks were attached (like small bells). A middle-aged woman in 1778 would have been at least a teenager twenty years earlier when Russians first came to the Fox Islands. This woman had witnessed the conflicts that had descended on the island and had survived with a composure and dignity that awed the great navigator. To say that Unangaġ had become slaves, had become nothing more than hapless victims, is to ignore the testimony of this woman's presence and to deny the vitality and intelligence of the younger woman Webber sketched.

"Portrait of an Unangax male, perhaps 'Yermusk,' who was taken aboard Captain James Cook's vessel, the *Resolution*, after his kayak capsized, 28 June 1778." Watercolor by John Webber, 1778. British Library, Reference no: Add.Ms.15514 f.22, Record no.: C3119-03.



While the ships were still anchored outside *Samgan Udaa*, Unangaġ brought their kayaks up and began trading fishing implements for tobacco. Once a trade was completed, a man would take off his hat in acknowledgement and repeat the word “Russ.” One young man upset his kayak while trading. Now Unangaġ were among the paramount kayakers of the north and it is unlikely that the plunge the man took into the cold water was anything except deliberate. The sailors quickly lifted him out while his companions took his kayak to shore. On board the *Resolution* he was invited into Cook’s cabin. Somewhat to the captain’s surprise, he went without hesitation. He was offered dry clothes that he put on with all the ease of a European.

His dress was an upper Garment like a Shirt, made of the large gut of some sea animal, probably the Whale, and an under garment of the same shape, made of birds skins dressed with the feathers on and neatly sewed together; the feathered side he wore next his skin: It was mended or patched with pieces of silk stuff and his Cap was ornamented with two or three sorts of glass Beads.¹²

Cook did not give the man’s name. Samwell recorded it as *Yermusk*. Lydia Black discovered in the consistory records of Yakutsk that his Unangaġ name was Kaguluġ.¹³ Having changed into dry clothing, he spent the afternoon aboard the ship. One of the first things he did was to ask for a piece of tobacco followed by a pinch of snuff. The English decided to follow up with the next “luxury” that gentlemen were accustomed to sharing and offered him a small drink of alcohol. However, with a show of good humor, he refused it and amused the seamen by staggering around the ship as though drunk. He was able to point to Kamchatka on a map. Lieutenant King understood him to say that people from Kamchatka were among them, that there were people with a light complexion like the English and people with a darker skin tone like himself living there. All of these, that is the Russians and the people from various Native groups of Kamchatka, “wore crosses, to which they paid a peculiar reverence.”¹⁴ Kaguluġ, it would seem, was not baptized although, if Edgar is to be believed, he had “been with the Russians from a Child.”¹⁵ King later decided that he had, in fact, been baptized.

Although the surgeon, William Anderson, was the finest linguist aboard, he was too ill with tuberculosis to give his attention to Kaguluġ. The first Aleut/English vocabulary lists were made by Samwell and King who wrote that Kaguluġ “spoke sentences to us in that Language.” At the end of his stay the young man “went ashore enriched with Presents of Tobacco & other things which Capt Cook gave him.”¹⁶

12 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 391-392.

13 Bergsland, *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*, 20.

14 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1426.

15 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1359.

16 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1121.

The “innate good Disposition” of the Unanga had impressed Samwell. He conceded this behavior was due in part to the “frequent Visits of the Russians from Kamtschatka.” Cook and his men could do little more than speculate about conditions among the people on the island since they shared no common language with either Unanga or Russians. Cook wrote, “...as to honesty they might serve as a pattern to the most civilized nation upon earth.... They are remarkably cheerful and friendly amongst each other, and always behaved with great civility to our people.”¹⁷ He attributed this behavior to both the length of time the Russians had been at Unalaska, “to judge from the great subjection the Natives are under,”¹⁸ and to “some severe examples” the Russians had made “before they could bring them to any order.” For Cook, the ends justified the means, however ignorant he was of both, because “the most happy consequences have attended, and one sees now nothing but the greatest harmony subsisting between the two Nations.”¹⁹

By July 3, the fog had cleared and the English sailed out of the harbor and to the north. Three months later they returned to Unalaska Bay where Cook kept to the western side of Amaknak Island until, after taking an Unanga aboard the *Discovery* as a pilot, he again entered the familiar waters of *Samgan Udaa* on October 3. He remained twenty-three days. This October visit is most notable for meetings with Russians, about whom the English were invariably confused and often wrong. This was, of course, largely due to having to rely on pantomime and gestures for information. The Russians, in turn, were not averse to dissimulation as was evident from the contradictory information they supplied to simple questions.

Peter Natrubin was the first Russian seen by Cook’s crew although they mistook him for a Native. Shortly after Natrubin’s visit, an Unanga arrived whose “dress & Cap were conspicuous from their superior beauty & ornaments.”²⁰ King recognized him as Unanga and not Kamchatkan because of the labret hole in his lower lip. He met Captain Cook and requested a letter that could be sent to Kamchatka (and no doubt shared with the Russians back at the settlement). Cook prepared a note containing the names of the ships and their commanders. King gave the visitor a few metal crosses which “he received... with great Awe & respect.” The visitor explained how the Russians and Kamchatkans hung such crosses about their necks and crossed themselves. King deduced that their visitor was probably a Christian himself. The same man returned on the 7th with letters and fish pies for both Cook and Clerke. On receiving the fish pie, Cook remarked upon this “very singular present considering the place.” He described it as “a rye loaf or rather a pie made in the form of a loaf” with some salmon highly seasoned with pepper inside. Clerke was more effusive and said the salmon was very good, was “nicely season’d with Pepper & Salt, and the Crust, which was made of Rye Flour, was well raised and

17 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 459, 468.

18 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 458.

19 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 459.

20 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1444.

light.”²¹ Neither Cook nor King identified this visitor with the young man who had come aboard the *Resolution* in June. Only Samwell made this connection.²² In July Kagaluŕ had been described as wearing a feather parka that was patched and a cap ornamented with two or three beads. Perhaps following his daring first meeting with the English, his leadership abilities had been recognized. Now his “dress & Cap” were superior to most, more fitting for an envoy from the Russian settlement. Knut Bergsland confirms Kagaluŕ’s identification and adds his baptismal name, Yelisey Pupyshev.

John Ledyard described him as “a comely young chief” and he volunteered to accompany Kagaluŕ to the Russian settlement at Iliuliuk. They took a somewhat circuitous route, spending one night at a village on the way. For the last segment of the trip, Ledyard had to travel inside a kayak, “which I did not very readily agree to,” he wrote.

however, as there was no other place for me but to be thrust into the space between the holes extended at length upon my back and wholly excluded from seeing the way I went or the power of extricating myself upon any emergency. But as there was no alternative I submitted thus to be stowed away in bulk, and went head foremost very swift through the water about an hour, when I felt the canoe strike a beach, and afterwards lifted up and carried some distance, and then set down again, after which I was drawn out by the shoulders by three or four men, for it was now so dark I could not tell who they were, though I was conscious I heard a language that was new.²³

Thus, something like a sack of potatoes, the first Englishman arrived at Iliuliuk. He was taken to a barabara and when the door opened he saw to his joy and surprise that he had been led by two Europeans. The dwelling was particularly long, he thought. On each side was a rough plank platform on which a number of people sat. Ledyard invariably called them Indians. He made little distinction between Unangaŕ and the various people from Kamchatka. They bowed to him as he continued down to the far end where the Russians were gathered and where he was given a seat on a bench covered with furs. A change of clothes was brought to him: a blue silk shirt, a pair of pants, a fur cap, some boots and a gown. “All of which,” he wrote, “I put on with the same cheerfulness they were presented with. Hospitality is a virtue peculiar to man, and the obligation is as great to receive as to confer.” A table was set up in front of him and Kagaluŕ set out the bottles of spirits, the tobacco and snuff and other items Ledyard had brought and these were presented on behalf of Captain Cook. The Russians explained that they were all

Catherine II of Russia
by Johann Baptist von
Lampi the Elder, circa.
1780. Kunsthistorisches
Museum, (Vienna) Inv.
Nr. GG_7131.
wikipedia.org



21 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1333.

22 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1121.

23 Munford, John Ledyard’s Journal, 93-94.

subjects of the Empress Catherine of Russia. Those formalities over, Ledyard was given boiled whale, halibut fried in oil, broiled salmon, and rye bread. The Russians did not join him in the meal but set about enjoying the rum he had brought, which they drank straight. Ledyard's bed was very comfortable with furs above and below him. Before he dropped off to a sound sleep, he saw the Russians and Natives silently assemble for their evening devotions.

The next day, after a steam bath, a dose of brandy, and a breakfast of smoked salmon and ship's biscuit, he visited the Russian vessel. Snow had fallen during the night and this provided an excuse for him to remain an additional day when he was taken across the bay in a baidar, the large open skin boat, rowed by a dozen oarsmen. He was accompanied by "three of the principle Russians and some attendants."

The arrival of the three Russians with Ledyard created a sensation. The entire crew "from the Captain downwards" was moved by meeting Europeans so far from home. "To see people in so strange a part of the World," wrote King, "who had other ties then that of common humanity to recommend them, was such a novelty, & pleasure, & gave such a turn to our Ideas & feelings as may be very easily imagined."²⁴ The English accounts provide sketches of two Russian leaders with whom Unanga from the three villages had dealings along with a general description of the peaceful if somewhat distant relationships between Unanga and Russians.

The first of these was Gerasim Grigor'evich Izmailov, the commander of the outpost at Iliuliuk. He had left the settlement on September 2 to compile census information at Umnak, the Islands of Four Mountains, and other locations, and consequently had not met Ledyard.²⁵ As soon as he had returned from his trip to the west and had learned of Cook's arrival, he had set off to meet him. Ismailov had been at Unalaska with the Krenitsyn and Levashov expedition from 1768 to 1770. In 1776 he became Ivan Solov'ev's successor in the Fox Islands when he was hired to captain Solov'ev's former vessel, the *Sv. Pavel*. His crew included men from Solov'ev's voyage, and on arriving in the Fox Islands he occupied Solov'ev's old outpost on the north side of Unalaska Island.

Izmailov arrived at *Samgan Udaa* on the afternoon of October 14 and was given "bundles of fish and other things" by Unanga.²⁶ In the meantime, Cook had gone to visit the village in Deep Bay. On learning this, Izmailov set off around Fisherman Point and Brundage Head into Beaver Inlet. He arrived seated in the center hole of a three-person kayak, accompanied by twenty or thirty men in single hatch vessels. On landing his men immediately constructed a tent. According to Cook they used "materials which they brought with them, and then they made others for themselves of their Canoes paddles etc^a which they covered

24 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1445.

25 Beaglehold, *Cook and the Russians*, 3.

26 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part Two, 1140.

with grass, so that the people of the Village were at no trouble to find them lodging." Once the tent was ready, Izmailov invited Cook inside and served him berries and dried salmon, the best he had to offer under the circumstances. "He was a sensible intelligent man," wrote Cook, "and I felt no small Mortification in not being able to converse with him any other way than by signs assisted by figures and other Characters which however was a very great help."²⁷ Cook and Izmailov met aboard the *Resolution* the next day, Thursday, the 15th, and on Friday, the Russian visited Clerke on the *Discovery* before departing. He returned on Monday with his charts and stayed aboard the *Resolution* until Wednesday.

Izmailov's intelligence and energy, thought Cook, would have served him well in a more prestigious position. "He had a quick & lively manner," wrote King who gave him instruction in the use of Hadly's octant, a gift from Cook himself. Samwell noted his Russian dress and the brace of pistols that he carried. Most Russians wore clothes similar to that used by Unanga and which Izmailov perhaps also wore on normal occasions. His dress during this visit, however, brought attention to his position. "He did not forget to let us know he was one of the chief Russians in Nowan: Alatchka (Unalaska Island), wrote Edgar before declaring, "which he is I believe beyond a doubt." Izmailov, of course, had as high an opinion of his country as the English had of theirs. On the two evenings he spent aboard the *Resolution* he drank enough to become intoxicated, and then "you would suppose he could not be less than the prime minister to the Emperess," declared Edgar, "& she of course the best sovereign & russia the best part of the world, & the russian sailors & soldiers preferable to all others."

"A little more modesty on the side of this chief," concluded Edgar, "would have made him much more agreeable." Two days later a more reserved Russian arrived. Iakov Ivanov Sapozhnikov traveled from Umnak where he was foreman of a hunting party. He was captain of the *Sv. Evpl* [*St. Euplus*], owned by several merchants who were in competition with those who had outfitted Izmailov. Sapozhnikov was from Suzdal, an ancient city southeast of Moscow. His modesty did not prevent him from making clear that his origins were superior to Izmailov's. King caught this point immediately: "This Gentleman was a native of Moskow, & valued himself upon being an old Russian." And then he added, "Ismyloff was born at Jakouts [Yakutsk]."

Sapozhnikov had left Kamchatka in late September 1773. He and his men had gathered furs for several years in the Fox Islands and near Isanotskii Strait, at the tip of the Alaska Peninsula. For three years beginning in July 1775 he had worked cooperatively with Potap Zaikov, who hunted to the east while Sapozhnikov remained at Umnak. In May 1778 Zaikov returned and the two firms divided the furs they had secured. Shortly after this, word of Cook's arrival reached Umnak and Sapozhnikov went to Unalaska where Natrubin accompanied him to English Bay.

27 Beaglehole, *Journals*, Vol. III, Part One, 450.

“This man seemed to be the very reverse of all the other Russians,” wrote Cook. “He had a great share of Modesty and would drink no strong liquor, which all the other were immoderately fond of.” He was able to inform Cook about conditions at Petropavlovsk, including the prices of various articles the English would need, with more accuracy than had Izmailov. He requested to be allowed to take a gift to the commander of the outpost at Kamchatka. Cook sent a small hand telescope. The following year Sapozhnikov left the Fox Islands and reached Kamchatka with 52,520 rubles worth of furs, 1,590 rubles in tribute from the Aleuts, the telescope, a report about the English explorers, and Cook’s packet containing his chart of the North Pacific and his letters to the admiralty and his wife.²⁸



Chinese Emperor Hongli (1711-1799) in court dress. The Mandarins were the original catalyst for the Aleutian sea otter harvest, prizing its pelt for trimming hats and robes. Payment for a single skin was 80 to 100 rubles—roughly the annual wage of a Russian fur laborer in the North Pacific. [Original: hanging scroll, color on silk, Palace Museum, Beijing.](#)

After five years in the Aleutians, Izmailov returned to Russia in 1781 with an above average take of furs.²⁹ From 1783 to 1786 he was skipper on the *Three Saints* (*Tri Sviatitelia*—*The Three Church Teachers*), next to Bering’s two ships the most famous Russian vessel of the 18th century. With Gregorii Shelikhov aboard in 1783, Izmailov anchored the *Three Saints* at Unalaska for repairs and to take on water and four Unangaġ. He subsequently helped Shelikhov in his ruthless subjugation of the people on Kodiak and Afognak Islands.³⁰ In 1794 he again brought a new vessel, also named *Three Saints*, into Unalaska, this time with Archimandrite Ioasaf and nine other clerics or religious personnel aboard as part of the first religious mission to Alaska. He died in 1796 or 1797.

The Russians conveyed to Cook the idea that subduing the Aleutian Islands had been relatively easy. Establishing control over the mainland, however, still met opposition from people they described as “treacherous” and “perfidious.” Several men, including Ismailov, showed scars from battle wounds. Clerke did not doubt the truth of these encounters but he thought the Russians (whom he admired as honest fellows) may have been disingenuous in decrying their misfortunes. After all, he declared, they were in effect seizing another people’s country, forcing them to become “Tributaries to they don’t know who,” and when they attempted “by stealth or any other Means” to keep what belonged to them they were destroyed “without Mercy.”³¹ Obviously the Unangaġ and the Russians (along with the English) had conflicting views about what was going on.

The following year, King met an elderly Kamchatkan in Petropavlovsk who maintained fighting in the Aleutians had erupted over nothing more than a misunderstanding. From the description of the encounter, this man may have been one of the few survivors of the 1763-64 Unangaġ attack on four Russian vessels.

28 Pierce, *Russian America*, 442.

29 Berkh, *A Chronological History*, 104-105.

30 Pierce, *Russian America*, 206.

31 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1336.

They [the Russians] met with better success in the Islands to the West of Alashka having reduced them, tho not without losing a number of men & killing still a much greater number of the natives. An old man a Corporal of the Kamskadales at this village was among the first that went & is all over scars. He told me that only 5 out of a hundred in the party he was with returned alive to Kamchatka after having been eight years away. He said with a great deal of simplicity that they fought with the natives because they could not make them understand paying tribute, but that after some years when they could talk with them & explain what this tribute meant, all went on very peaceably. Indeed by his own account there were not many left to be fractious, however he gave them an excellent character.³²

The English were puzzled by the relationships between Russians and Unanga. "We could not help observing the great distance with which these common Sailors treat'd the Natives," wrote King. "Whether they are belov'd or fear'd by them, we cannot as yet pretend to say, but they are evidently much respect'd by them."³³ They were also unable to learn the year in which the Russians "had taken a severe revenge, and had laid the country under contribution, and obliged the inhabitants to pay a certain annual tribute in skins," or "to what extent they had subdued the country." Clerke wrote that "The first settlers on these Islands, took from the natives their bows, Arrows, spears, & all other kind of warlike instruments and destroy'd them, by which means they keep them greatly under subjection making them pay tribute."³⁴ Not all Unanga, however, had consented to pay tribute as Ismailov noted when he wrote, "I ordered the fur-tribute payers among the Aleuts, to provide them [the English] during their stay with fish and to furnish them with supplies."³⁵ That the Russians kept an armed guard at the door to their dwelling and posted guards around their storehouse at Iliuliuk suggests that as late as 1778 they slept uneasily.

32 King, "Journal of the Proceedings of his Majesty's Sloop Discovery from Kamchatka to Cape of Good Hope" in Joppien and Smith, 285.

33 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1446.

34 Beaglehole, *Journals, Vol. III, Part Two*, 1355.

35 Beaglehole, *Cook and the Russians*, 3.



St. Innocent
Metropolitan of Moscow
[wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Innocent_of_Moscow)

Chapter 4

Three Villages Under the Russian-American Company



In the years following Cook's voyage, people living in Makushin, Kashega, and Biorka found their options reduced as trade in Russian America was soon dominated by the activities of Grigorii I. Shelikhov, a man with voracious interest in the wealth of the territory and a vision of permanent settlements.¹ In 1781 he and two other merchants had formed a company that gradually absorbed and drove out smaller competitors while creating powerful allies in Russia. In 1790 he hired the legendary Alexander Baranov, who, forced to the wall by a series of business failures, reluctantly agreed to Shelikhov's persistent overtures. Baranov sailed from Okhotsk on the *Three Saints* for the settlement Shelikhov had founded on Kodiak in 1784. Approaching Unalaska Island, the vessel anchored in Kashega Bay to replenish its water supply. An early October storm blew in, however, and cornered the vessel, placing it in imminent danger. The crew managed to unload a portion of the cargo during low tide before the vessel capsized during the night of October 6, stranding everyone for the winter. Baranov's account of Unalaska in general and Kashega in particular portrayed a demoralized and innervated population. Along with other negative pronouncements, Baranov wrote:

- “in general they are all lazy and untidy”
- “their yurts are poor and cold”
- “they have no fires...except in their oil lamps”
- they seldom cook anything
- they rarely wear shoes
- “they observe no religious laws”
- “they know nothing of their origin”
- they rarely share food with each other
- “where there are no Russians...they make no effort at all”²



Grigorii I. Shelikhov
[wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grigoriy_I._Shelikhov)

1 See discussions of fur hunting periods in Makarova and Liapunova. See also Black's division of periods in "The Nature of Evil," 117-122.

2 Khlebnikov, Notes on Russian America, 121-125.



Alexandr Andreyevich Baranov
by Mikhail T. Tikhonov, 1818. [State History Museum, Moscow.](#)

His account was strikingly different from those made by Cook's expedition. Perhaps the people at Solov'ev's old haunt were indeed so ground down, so thoroughly subjugated. Perhaps Baranov darkened his report hoping to discredit firms that had preceded him into this area. Perhaps, and this may be the actual source of his disaffected attitude, the Aleutian winter got to him. He had, after all, arrived during an October storm and left in April. Kashega must have been deathly cold for the stranded men. Winds channeled through the draw, shuffling sheets of ice on the long lake, white-capping the water when thawed, and bringing an unrelieved dampness. He never witnessed the exuberant flurry of activity that accompanied summer and fall. The river would have welcomed returning red salmon while the flats leading to Kuliliak Bay echoed the same color with wild strawberries. Migrating fur seals would pass north not far from the village. Unangaġ had found this area a wonderful homeland and would continue living here for another century and a half. By spring Baranov had supervised the construction of three large baidaras and using one of these he navigated a course to Kodiak Island and Three Saints Bay to begin a quarter century of struggles, triumphs, and defeats.

Fortunately, we have a more detailed description of Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka written about the same time by Captain Gavriil Sarychev. His summary of Unangaġ portrayed them as having "a good natural understanding, very considerable talents, and a quick comprehension." While emotionally reserved and modest, they were "quiet and peaceable among each other" and exceptionally polite and helpful to visitors.³ Sarychev was part of a government expedition headed by Captain Joseph Billings. A month after leaving Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka, in May 1790, Billings's *Glory of Russia* stood off Biorka Village in Beaver Inlet. Here the expedition's priest, Vasiliy Sivtsov, baptized 63 males and 29 females from various villages. Forty-eight were from Biorka itself. Martin Sauer—the somewhat renegade member of the expedition who published his account without permission—attempted to get "the best information" he could about the people. He..... made the interesting comment that Biorka people called themselves "Cowghalingen," suggesting either that *Qawalangin* was an inclusive term that included *Qigiġun* or else that the *Qigiġun* had not yet appropriated this area.⁴ He observed that men wore birdskin parkas while the sea otter parkas of women had been replaced by ones made from seal fur. In general, he wrote, the people "wear

3 Sarychev, *Account of a Voyage of Discovery*, 78. See a modern translation of these phrases in Khlebnikov, *Notes on Russian America*, 130.

4 Sauer, *An Account of a Geographical and Astronomical Expedition*, 154. Merck noted that the people of Akun and Tigalda called themselves Kignon (perhaps a version of *Qigiġun*). Merck, *Siberia and Northwestern America*, 168. Billings reported that the Unalaska and Umnak people called themselves Kaughalingn. Merck, *Siberia and Northwestern America*, 199.

what they can get.”⁵ He found the men were exceptional kayakers, “sporting about more like amphibious animals than human beings.”⁶ While at Biorka, Carl Merck saw five men arrive from the village on Unalga Island. They came in five baidarkas (with their wives riding inside). After they were welcomed, they used these kayaks to create temporary shelters.

Now the hosts cooked tender seaweed for the guests...with chunks of whale blubber. This was served in wooden bowls, with large shells used instead of spoons. Each of them also got a piece of whale fin, which they eat raw. It is a delicacy to them. Then after sundown the guests were invited to join their customary evening enjoyments.⁷

Merck, along with Sarychev and Billings, visited *Uchuyuuux*, or Bobrovskyoe, on the Unalaska side of Beaver Inlet. During Cook’s visit, the village had possessed seven or eight barabaras; now it had only two dwellings along with a “cabin” for the promyshlenniks—probably a private barabara with a door—along with a small steam bath.⁸



By June 18, the *Glory of Russia* was sailing east toward the Alaska Peninsula and Kodiak, and then it was back to Kamchatka for the winter. By late June 1791 both ships of the expedition, the *Glory of Russia* and the *Black Eagle*, returned to Unalaska where they established headquarters at Iliuliuk. The men spent several months compiling a detailed census of the region, listing males who paid tribute (iasak), those who did not because of age or infirmity, and those who were minors. In February 1792 Sarachev left to explore the west side of Unalaska in a three-hatch baidarka, accompanied by Kaguluḡ, the man who had played a prominent role during Captain Cook’s visit. Now known under his baptismal name, Yelisey Pupyshev, he was the acting chief of Imagna Village in Unalaska

The *Slava Rossjii* [*Glory of Russia*] in Beaver Inlet, by Luka Voronin. From *Early Maritime Artists of the Pacific Northwest* by John Frazier Henry. Repository: Loussac Library, Anchorage. Original image from F.A. Golder’s portfolio “Alaska Scenes,” Hydrographic Section, Ministry of Marine, Petrograd.

5 Sauer, *An Account of a Geographical and Astronomical Expedition*, 155.

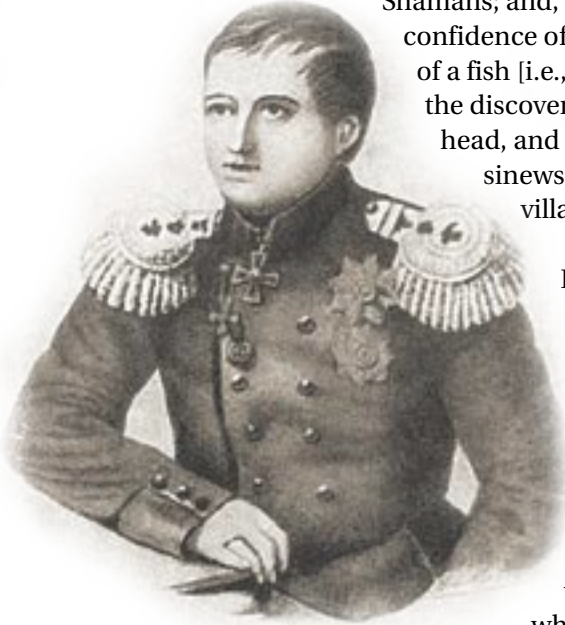
6 Sauer, *An Account of a Geographical and Astronomical Expedition*, 158.

7 Merck, *Siberia and Northwestern America*, 70.

8 Merck, *Siberia and Northwestern America*, 89.

Bay. Their three-day stay at Makushin provided an opportunity to witness one of the seasonal “games...which continue through the winter until the beginning of spring, or until the appearance of the whales.”⁹

Their origin is ascribed to the Shamans, who assure them that the spirits are pleased with such performances, and will, in return, send them plenty of whales on shore. The performers wear masks, resembling the faces of the spirits which have appeared to the Shamans; and, although these men no longer possess the implicit confidence of the people, the Aleutians always celebrate the arrival of a fish [i.e., a whale] with these games. The person first making the discovery announces it by wearing a narrow fillet on his head, and has a right to half the entrails, skin, tongue, and sinews. The rest is divided by the trojars [chiefs] of the village among the other Aleutians.



Gavriil Andreyevich Sarychev
[wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org)

He described an elaborate horizontal arrangement of poles placed at three varying distances below the entrance hole of the large barabara. (There were only two dwellings for the forty-five residents of Makushin at this time.) His measurements suggest a vaulted residence with a high roof. After the guests from different villages had gathered inside, men began to swing themselves up through the three sets of poles like gymnasts—“during which a perpetual clamour is kept up by the shouts of the people at whose jurt it takes place, while those who miss their aim and fall to the ground are saluted by the spectators with loud peals of laughter.”

Once the guests were seated, the dances began with the entrance of two boys who were followed by male drummers dressed with “fanciful” hats, “girdles round their loins, and bands on their arms and feet.” Next came pairs of women “having their heads encircled with binders embroidered with goat’s hair, flourishing bladders of birds’ skins, and dancing to the drums.” A second “string of females carrying arrows” was followed by “a train of men in motley masks, with wide streaked mouths, and on their heads a sea-dog’s face.” The term “sea-dog” referred to any seal. A rousing period of drumming was accompanied by singing, which Sarychev admitted he “by no means understood,” and then three masked men sang additional verses.

These men were followed by female masks, who seated themselves by the man with the sea-dog’s face, before whom a few other women danced with disheveled hair, carrying beards of sea-lions in their hands, occasionally pointing to the mask seated in the middle. They sung the following verse:

9 Sarychev, *Account of a Voyage of Discovery*, 61.

The hellish island Sakehadok
Contains the arrows we must not forget;
Yet why should we remember
That which brings no good?¹⁰



"Masks used by the Oonalashkans in their Dances...." by Martin Sauer, From *Expedition to the Northern Parts of Russia*. Repository: Loussac Library, Anchorage

This was a performance put on by Unalaska Unangă and it "differed much" from the next dance presented by visitors from the Andreanof Islands. A few days later, while at Kashega, Sarychev observed a shaman conduct a healing ritual.¹¹ "The Shamans never demand any compensation from the people," he wrote, "contentedly receiving what is given them, and never requiring offerings for the spirits." After visiting as far south as Chernofski, Sarychev and Pupyshev returned only to be storm-bound in Kashega for another week.

10 Sarychev, *Account of a Voyage of Discovery*, 62. See Black's translation of a portion of this account and her discussion of the Makushin celebration in *Aleut Art*, 2003, 76.

11 See Black's translation in *Aleut Art*, 2003, 37.

The Aleutians becoming at length quite tired of bad weather, they one day collected themselves together men, women, and children, and repaired to an open field, where having lighted a fire and turned themselves to the wind, they clapped their hands and screamed with all their might, quietly returning in the full expectation of a favorable change.¹²

Stormbound in Kashega based on Sarychev's stay at Kashega when he witnessed a ritualistic healing and on Innokentii Shaishnikov's stay when he worked on an Aleut translation.



This was not the last time people screamed at the weather. That evening Pupyshchev informed Sarychev that the chiefs and shamans were “conjuring a spirit for favourable weather.” After a quarter of an hour, the shaman cried out and fell into a trance that terrorized the residents. They gathered around him and sang “a

¹² Sarychev, *Account of a Voyage of Discovery*, 66.

solemn lamentation,” supplicating the spirit to spare his life. Once the shaman revived, he explained that he had summoned the spirit into his presence and demanded fine weather. When the spirit had refused, the shaman had reproved him and threatened to expose him as powerless. At this, the furious spirit had attacked him and sent him into a deep trance. While in this state, the shaman learned that the weather would not improve until three days after the death of a certain woman (whom he named, probably much to her discomfort) during the upcoming summer. Then he told Sarychev three interesting things. First, he could travel as far as Makushin but no farther as bad weather would again overtake him. Second, he should not attempt to proceed further, even if the Makushin people encouraged him to do so. Third, that when he reached his ship he would find the condition of his companions had deteriorated.



And so Sarychev and Chief Pupyshev left Kashega. They reached Makushin just as “violent winds” prevented travel around the island. Despite the shaman’s warning, Sarychev was determined to leave. With three guides he went by baidarka to the end of Makushin Bay and began the trek across the mountains to Captains Bay. “The farther I advanced, the steeper it became,” he wrote. Eventually, “I saw to my dismay that I stood on the brink of an immense precipice, whose sides were covered with rocks, at the bottom of which flowed a brook....I was seized with such an irresistible dread, that I could proceed no

Nick Lekanoff (right), Al Dalrymple and Steven Hapoff (left) at the Pass above Makushin Bay, October 1969. Photograph by Ray Hudson.

farther....” After a night of violent tempests and a day when the sea was agitated, he returned to Makushin Village where the chief took pity on him and suggested another route. This time he and his companions portaged into Beaver Inlet from where he eventually made it back to the ships in Captains Bay. On arriving, he found the third prediction all too true: fourteen men had died of scurvy during his absence.

The census compiled by the Billings Expedition, although several Unangaꝯ chiefs assisted, was incomplete for a variety of reasons, including the requirement that people go to the ship to be registered.¹³ Nevertheless, it described our three villages within the context of their respective communities. Makushin and Kashega were part of a complex of six villages strung out along the southwestern coast of Unalaska, their populations totaling 164 males. Makushin was the largest with 45, while Kashega had 32. Two of the six villages were very small (with less than ten males in each) while two were of comparable size with Makushin and Kashega.

Biorka was the largest of the three villages in Beaver Inlet, with 21 of the 49 males registered in the census. If Biorka were in fact a *Qawalangin* village in 1792 as Sauer noted, its relationship with Unalga village and the sixteen other settlements in the Krenitzin Islands—all clearly *Qigiꝯgun* villages—is more difficult to explain. Traditional rivalries may have receded in the face of a common foe. Only one village on Akun and one on Tigalda were larger than Biorka. However, as an illustration of the uncertainty of these numbers, consider that in 1790 there were 29 males from Biorka who were baptized (and 19 females). Bergsland suggests that the disparity (between 29 in 1790 and 21 in 1792) may indicate that a number of able-bodied men were taken away to hunt sea otters and seals by ships belonging to Shelikhov.¹⁴ The census has names of men from the other two Beaver Inlet villages who had been taken to work aboard such a vessel. All in all, Biorka appears to have been a major village in this eastern complex in the 1790s.

What do these numbers mean in terms of the catastrophic population decline that marked the end of the 18th and the start of the 19th centuries? Based on a careful reading of the earliest reports, Roza Liapunova postulated there were “7,500 to 9,500 people, or, in round numbers, 8,000 to 10,000 people, but no more” at the time the Russians arrived in the Aleutians in mid-18th century.¹⁵ By 1792, less than 50 years later, the population had plummeted to about 3,000. The worst, however, was still to come when the population in the eastern Aleutians, for which region we have the most complete records, reached its lowest point in 1822. That year, according to Veniaminov, there were 1,474 residents.¹⁶ By 1834 he recorded a slight increase of twenty, although the number of males had

13 Bergsland, *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*, 22-23.

14 Bergsland, *Ancient Aleut Personal Names*, 23.

15 Liapunova, “The Aleuts before Contact with the Russians,” 8-10.

16 He recorded 695 males and 779 females. Veniaminov, *Notes*, 246.

diminished.¹⁷ In 1829 Iakov Netsvetov, the priest stationed at Atka, estimated the population of the Central and Western Aleutians plus the Commander Islands at 800.¹⁸ Adding this estimate to Veniaminov's 1834 figure [1,494] the total Aleut population around 1830 was approximately 2,300. In summary, the Aleut population from the arrival of the Russians until 1792 declined between 60 and 68 percent. The decrease between 1792 (3,000) and 1830 (2,300) was 23 percent. However, the total population loss up to 1830 was a reduction from somewhere between 7,500 and 9,500 to a low of 2,300, or between 69 and 76 percent. Current archaeological work in the Chain suggests the pre-contact population was even greater than Liapunova's estimate and the consequent loss even more catastrophic.¹⁹

Catherine II had declined Shelikhov's 1788 petition for recognition as the sole legitimate company in the territory. Following Shelikhov's death in 1795 and her own death a year later, her son Paul began to favor a more centralized organization of the fur trade, and in 1799 the company secured its long-sought monopoly. Over the next 68 years, a series of imperial charters to the Russian-American Company extended its governance under a succession of chief managers or governors. The territory was partitioned into manageable districts. Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega fell within the Unalaska District that encompassed the Alaska Peninsula, Unimak, the Krenitzin Islands, Unalaska, Umnak, and the Pribilof Islands. A district manager was stationed at Unalaska (Iliuliuk). In larger villages there were company employees, called *baidarshchiks*, who represented the firm. These men were sometimes Russian, but often Unangaġ. The Makarin, Yatchmenoff, Petikoff, Krukoff, Kudrin, and Golodoff families had such men among their modern founders.

There is little or no information specific to our three villages during the 68 years of the RA Company, but it is logical to conclude that residents in these villages shared experiences common to the bulk of Unangaġ and that their fortunes and misfortunes were frequently precipitated by local management. Men who worked as hunters aboard Russian vessels or under Russian supervision were often kept at a bare subsistence level. In 1818 Vasiliġ M. Golovnin found that Unangaġ from the Fox Islands had been "taken against their will into service aboard Company vessels." The prices charged for goods were so high that salaries were entirely used up when purchasing meager clothing to supplement the insufficient clothes issued to them.²⁰ Their daily food allowance was "only one dried or pickled fish" and this was augmented on holidays with bread and coarse grain.²¹

17 The number of males was down to 682 while the number of females had risen to 812. Veniaminov, Notes, 245.

18 This was close to Khlebnikov's 1827 figure of 351 males, 363 females, a total of 714 (plus 30 or 40 people absent on hunting trips from Attu and Amchitka). Black, The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: the Atkha Years, 12. Khlebnikov, Notes on Russian America, 220-221. Both Netsvetov's and Khlebnikov's figures are considerably higher than Litke's 1825 figure of 569.

19 Corbett and Lefevre, "Prehistoric Village Organization in the Western Aleutians," 251-266.

20 Luehrmann, Alutiiq Villages under Russian and U.S. Rule, 67.

21 Golovnin, "Memorandum of Captain 2nd Rank Golovnin," 69.

Starvation threatened communities in the depth of winter—even during periods when there was competent management. During the administration of Fedor Burenin at Unalaska (1806 to 1813) all the people living in a village on the east side of Akutan died of hunger except for one old woman. Ivan Kriukov was the next manager and he was followed in 1821 by Rodion Petrovskii (1821-1829). The following year seven people starved to death at Kashega.²² There was a marked absence of fish that year. At Iliuliuk itself, Petrovskii used company supplies to avoid starvation among the local people.²³ As Luehrmann has pointed out with specific reference to Kodiak, “the material amenities islanders could hope to gain from working for the Russians were small at least through the first third of the nineteenth century.”²⁴

The Second Charter, good for another twenty years, was issued in 1821. By this time all Unangaġ fell within the regulatory umbrella of the company. Although Iakov Netsvetov, the Unangaġ priest stationed at Atka from 1828 to 1843, mentioned independent Aleuts, this was independence within defined limits. The people who today would call themselves Unangaġ were classified both as Aleuts and Creoles. Creoles were members of a special category of Russian citizens. This was a civil status and was “assigned to persons of Alaskan birth who claimed at least one Russian ancestor or who occupied positions of responsibility in management.”²⁵ In 1821 the number of creoles registered in the territory was small (about 300), but they had become significant members of an evolving community the company hoped to foster as a “‘middle class’ stratum in the Russian territory...with roots deep in the native Alaskan tradition, in the Alaskan soil and, at the same time, culturally and socially tied to Russia.”²⁶

Unangaġ who did not achieve the status of creoles remained Aleuts or “islanders” under the Second Charter and as such they were Russian subjects but their status was as yet undefined. Their primary obligation to the RA Company was to hunt sea mammals. Consequently, the company could draft half of all these males between the ages of 18 and 50 for service. The selection of hunters was to be made by the chiefs (toions) who were to try to keep enough males in a family so that village subsistence was not endangered. Those selected were to be relieved after three years unless they wished to continue working for the company. The rights of islanders to hunt and fish on their own were preserved with the provision that they stayed near their home villages. Permission from the company was required to go to neighboring areas. Of course, as the sole legitimate fur dealer in the territory, the RA Company was the only company to whom islanders were allowed to sell their catch. The distinction between creoles and Aleuts was significant. “All Creoles live far better than the Aleuts,”

22 Veniaminov, Notes, 257.

23 Sarafian, Winston Lee, Russian-American Company Records as a Source of Aleut Ethnohistory. Transcript. 18 November 1822, Vol. 3, No. 296, folio 120-121.

24 Luehrmann, Alutiiq Villages under Russian and U.S. Rule, 69.

25 Pierce, Russian America, 10.

26 Black, introduction, The Journals of Iakov Netsvetov: The Atka Years, xxvi.

wrote Veniaminov, “at least they have warm yurtas [semi-underground homes, *barabaras*] and more clothing and linen than the Aleuts, who, with all their efforts are not in a position to have them.”²⁷



Christening of Iakov Netsvetov.

In several ways the Second Charter preserved the rights of the company while attempting to safeguard Unangāx from the exploitation they had experienced in the past. Nevertheless, travel and settlement restrictions continued. Thus, “islanders not in Company service are permitted to fish along shores where they live for their personal and family sustenance, but they are not allowed to go to neighboring areas without special permission from the Company.”²⁸ It also specified the political parameters of Unangāx communities by placing the company clearly in charge. “Islanders are administered by tribal toions under the supervision of *starshinas* [elders],” read the charter, “appointed by the Company from among its best Russian servitors.” (Note that these “Russian servitors” may have been Unangāx.) The responsibilities of both groups, elders and chiefs, included “caring for and supervising the islanders entrusted to them. They are to resolve conflicts, arguments and dissatisfactions, and assist the islanders in their needs.” Whether or not the toions or the elders (or both) were appointed by the

²⁷ Veniaminov, Notes, 248, note*.

²⁸ Dmytryshyn, Crownhart-Vaughan, Vaughan, *The Russian American Colonies*, 362, 363.

Company, in actual fact the role of the company was more one of confirmation than of selection. In most cases, communities elected their leaders and this election was then subject to confirmation by the company.²⁹ In some cases, such as at Tigalda, the toion—in this case, the translator Ivan Pan'kov—was also the company manager.³⁰



Ioann Veniaminov,
Metropolitan of
Moscow. Image
courtesy Francis
Broderick.

Ioann Veniaminov's ten years at Unalaska fell during the period of the second charter. The priest made nineteen visits to villages within a parish that extended from Umnak to the Pribilof Islands and onto the Alaska mainland. While his official journals are brief and focus on ecclesiastical duties, they provide sketches of Makushin, Kashega and Biorka when added to his remarks in the first great Alaskan ethnography, *Notes on the Islands of the Unalashka District*. On April 16, 1825, eight months after arriving at Unalaska (following almost a year at Sitka), Veniaminov set off on his first visit to villages west of Unalaska. He traveled in a new open skin boat—a baidar—rowed by ten men and equipped with a sail. Stepanan Kriukov, manager of the RA Company station on Umnak, went along as a translator. Kriukov was a son of an Aleut woman and Ivan Kriukov, the former Unalaska manager whose praise of Aleuts had brought the priest to the Aleutians. One of Stepan's sons, Gregory Kriukov, would play a prominent role at Biorka in coming decades. What had promised to be a quick voyage ground to a halt as headwinds forced the party ashore at the western tip of the island. From here the priest and twenty companions hiked to Makushin Village, a trek through gusting snow that confirmed the effectiveness of the gut raincoat. "Neither wind nor

rain," he wrote, "can penetrate this very thin garment."³¹ He visited Makushin for nine days, beginning April 19, during which time he held services, gave religious instruction, and blessed marriages. Altogether, he stopped at Makushin eight times during four westward trips.

The priest's description of Makushin Village is not as detailed as one might wish. What is clear is that the village was located on the long beach at Volcano Bay, at the north approach to Makushin Bay. The RA Company stationed a baidarshchik in the village and owned "a yurta, a barabora, a shed, and a steam-bath."³² There were five baidarkas in use in 1834 and the fifteen men and twenty women lived in six yurts and six barabaras. Russians used the terms *yurta* and

29 For the evolving roles of toion and starshina, see Luehrmann, *Alutiiq Villages under Russian and U.S. Rule*, 88-91.

30 Veniaminov, *Journals*, 76, 83.

31 Veniaminov, *Journals*, 35, note 9.

32 Veniaminov. *Notes*, 93.

barabara when referring to the *ulaĭ* or *ulaagamax*. Veniaminov distinguished “yurts” from “barabaras,” in which “barabaras” probably referred to more traditionally constructed dwellings. Unalaska, for example, was said to have 27 yurts, while Kashega had eight Unangaĭ yurts, and the village on Unalga had three yurts and three barabaras. Although the indigenous dwelling survived throughout the Russian period, it underwent significant alterations. Floors and interior walls were eventually lined with wood. As indicated by the number of barabaras at Makushin, the large communal dwelling had been replaced by smaller structures, generally used by single families. The introduction of doors and windows were structural modifications that dramatically changed the appearance of villages. Russians are credited with introducing doors, but at least one early visitor noted that dwellings—probably the large multi-roomed structures—had “hidden loopholes... in the sides, by which the residents can escape or get out to defend themselves if the main [overhead] entrance is in hostile hands.”³³

The decline in Makushin’s population, from forty-five males in 1792 to thirty-five males *and* females in 1825, is partially attributable to the decline in salmon. The salmon stream inside Makushin Bay was once considered the finest on the island, but whereas once they were taken by the “hundreds of thousands,” now, Veniaminov wrote, “they scarcely catch twenty thousands.”³⁴

On his first visit, Veniaminov and his companions traveled from Makushin to Kashega, arriving April 28. Over the next few days he chrismated twenty-three people, heard confession, “instructed the local inhabitants on all that which is necessary for our salvation,” and heard confession. “I taught all of the Aleuts using a set sequence, and even identical wording. I have written instructions for this practice [one word illegible]. I omit nothing that is essential for the preservation of faith and the redemption of each man.”³⁵ He held a service for the dead in the cemetery and blessed six marriages before leaving on April 30 to continue westward to Nikolski near the southern tip of Umnak Island.

Veniaminov counted forty-one residents at Kashega, eighteen male and twenty-three female. There were eight Aleut “yurts” along with a “yurta” for the resident baidarshchik. This man was in charge of the entire western half of Unalaska indicating that by this time Kashega, Chernofski and a few other smaller villages in the area operated as a single economic unit. At Kashega the company had “a shed, a barabora, a steambath and a cattle yard.”³⁶ Cattle were introduced in 1833 and the Kashega herd consisted of four cows and a bull. The small herd was “incomparably better” than the forty-five cattle at Iliuliuk (Unalaska) and

33 Palas, quoted in Masterson and Brower. *Bering’s Successors*, 44-45. There were also hidden underground locations where families could be concealed during invasions (Veniaminov, Notes, 264).

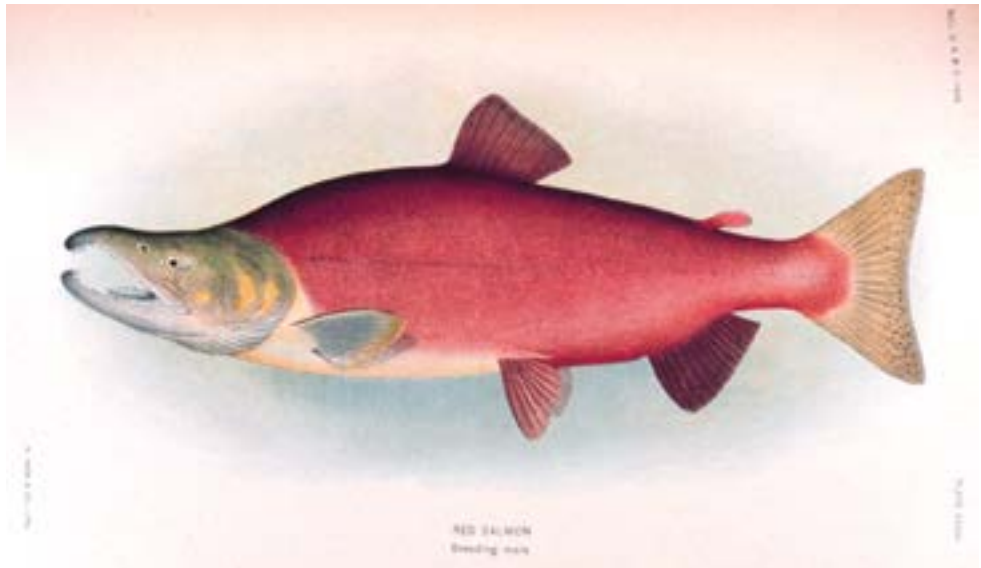
34 Veniaminov, Notes, 84, 94, 39.

35 Veniaminov, Journals, 35, note 11.

36 Veniaminov, Notes, 94-95.

Veniaminov credited this to a milder climate and to an abundance of forage.³⁷ Pigs were also raised here (as well as at Unalaska and Makushin). Somehow, unlike residents of other villages, Kashega and Makushin people were able to keep the pigs from rooting up their barabaras.³⁸ Despite these agricultural beginnings, Kashega's resources were "not very enviable,

though red salmon enter the mouth of the stream almost from January to July and Dolly Vardens, humpbacked and silver salmon from June to October, the quantity is very small, so that, even on the best of days, the catch hardly exceeds 300 fish. Sea fish are taken outside the bay at a considerable distance. Occasionally it is possible to take sea lions on the south side. A small number of seals are taken on the [offshore] rocks. Roots—*sarana* and *chagitka*—which grow in large quantities, constitute one of the main items of subsistence.³⁹



Red salmon, breeding male, "The Fishes of Alaska." Bulletin of the Bureau of Fisheries, Vol. XXVI, 1906. P. 360, Plate XXXIV. NOAA.

Veniaminov returned to Makushin and Kashega in August 1828 and again in April 1830 and April/May 1832. He continued to use Stepan Kriukov as his translator although by 1830 his command of the language had made this almost unnecessary. During the 1832 trip, while at Kashega, he and Semen Pan'kov finished correcting their translation of one of the Gospels.⁴⁰ On this occasion, after visiting Makushin, he returned to Unalaska by hiking overland from Portage Bay. His last visit to these two villages was in April 1834, just a few months before he left the Aleutians for good. The populations had increased slightly. There were now thirty-eight people at Makushin and forty-three at Kashega.⁴¹

37 Veniaminov, Notes, 40-42, 95.

38 Veniaminov, Notes, 42.

39 Veniaminov, Notes, 95.

40 Veniaminov, Journals, 159.

41 Veniaminov, Journals, 191.

The priest made fewer trips to Biorka, then neither the largest nor the most important village in the area. Between Beaver Inlet and Unimak Island to the east, there were ten villages with a total population of 352. In Beaver Inlet itself were Bobrovskoe (in Deep Bay) with forty-one residents, Biorka (Sedankosvkoe) with forty-four, and Sechkinskoe (in the bay between Ugadaga and Agamgik bays) with a very small but unrecorded number of residents. Unalga Island, near the mouth of Beaver Inlet, had twenty-three inhabitants. In the Krenitzin Islands there were villages on Avatanak with forty-nine residents, on Akutan with thirteen, and on Tigalda with ninety-seven. On Akun Island there were three villages: Artelnovskoe with thirty-two residents, Rechesnoe with thirty-seven, and Seredninskoe with sixteen. (In addition, on the north end of Unalaska Island, in Kalekhta Bay, was a village with fourteen residents.)⁴²

Veniaminov's first visit to Biorka was in September 1828. He gathered the residents into the tent he had brought, provided religious instruction, chrismated individuals and blessed marriages. He heard confession and gave four ill or aged individuals Holy Communion. On his trip back, he crossed Beaver Inlet to Ugadaga Bay and hiked overland to Iliuliuk along a much-used trail.⁴³ Although he stopped at Akun, Tigalda, and other nearby villages several times, he did not return to Biorka until 1831 when he visited for two days in September. His brief description said the village included "6 yurtas" for the forty-four residents, seventeen males and twenty-seven females. They were cultivating gardens, but their staple food was "deep sea fish and shell-fish."⁴⁴

We owe a description of Unalaska villages a few years later to a smallpox epidemic that first appeared in New Archangel (Sitka) in 1836 and then spread to Kodiak and the Alaska Peninsula. By 1839 it was threatening the Unalaska district. The company physician at Sitka, Dr. Eduard Blashke, traveled to the Fox Islands and vaccinated people at Iliuliuk and in outlying villages. His description is particularly valuable since it clearly distinguished smaller communities, like Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin, from Iliuliuk that continued in the throes of cultural change.

"The Aleuts go about in jackets and frock coats," Lavrentii Zagoskin would write following a visit to the principal settlement three years later in 1842, "their wives and daughters in calico dresses and kamleya [parka covers], which are long shirts made of ticking or nankeen [unbleached cotton] with red cloth trimming around the collar and hem. The married women, guarding against sin, keep their heads always covered while the girls wear their hair long, tied at the back of the neck with a ribbon."⁴⁵ A drawing he made shows a dozen men outside a building on a Sunday. Eleven of them are dressed in gut kamleikas. Based on the elaborate collars, these were probably ceremonial kamleikas similar to those collected in the 1840s by Governor Etholén and others. The hats were adaptations of

42 Veniaminov, Notes, 259-260, corrected from the text.

43 Veniaminov, Journals, 90-91.

44 Veniaminov, Notes, 96.

45 Michael, ed., Lieutenant Zagoskin's Travels, 87.

a European seaman's cap, topped with a circle of fine embroidery and fancy stitching.

In contrast, Blashke found that in smaller villages “the usual Aleut dress is a birdskin parka which the poor wear over their bare body. Most Aleuts, however, wear a canvas shirt underneath.”⁴⁶ The parkas were washed frequently and Aleuts used steam baths on a regular basis. Blashke found that steps had been taken to insure that starvation did not occur. “Special so-called ‘company’ baraboras have been built in every village,” he explained—these would have been the company yurts mentioned by Veniaminov—“in order to avoid a shortage of winter supplies of dried fish and fat, the chief and essential objects of the Aleut diet.” Half of each season’s supply of dried fish was placed in this storehouse, under the control of the baidarshchik who distributed it as needed. Food supplies were exchanged among villages if that became necessary. “In this way,” he concluded, “the almost annual spring famine of previous years is averted.”



He found subtle differences among residences. Chiefs and “well-to-do Aleuts” had baraboras divided into two or three rooms, while the baidarshchiks even had glass windows. Ordinary homes were “of timber or plank construction, rarely more than twenty-one feet in length or fourteen feet in width. The height rarely exceeds that of a man.” There was an entrance hall, where any wet or damp clothing was left, and where the cooking fire was kept along with “supplies of dried fish, fat, etc.” The inner compartment was the living space and this was “always kept neat, the floor...strewn with straw and covered with straw mats, as are sometimes the plank beds and the walls.” He acknowledged that villages differed in cleanliness, methods of subsistence, the success of their hunters, and overall prosperity. “Nevertheless,” he concluded, “the number of well-run villages considerably exceeds the number of poorly run ones, of which there are only two.” It is significant that he never mentioned village chapels.

“A Man and a Woman of Oonalashka” by Martin Sauer. From *Expedition to the Northern Parts of Russia, 1802*. Repository: Loussac Library, Anchorage.

Although over a thousand individuals were vaccinated, 134 people died of smallpox, including seventeen at Iliuliuk and a significant number in the Krenitzin Islands.⁴⁷ The death toll for our three villages is unknown, but if the

46 Tikhmenev, *A History of the Russian-American Company*, 471, note 22.

47 Black, et al. *The History and Ethnohistory of the Aleutians East Borough*, 42. *Records of the Russian-American Company, correspondence of the Governor's General, Communications Sent*, vol. 16, no. 481, folios 191v-195, November 4, 1838. Sarafian, *Russian-American Company Records as a Source of Aleut Ethnohistory*.

Krenitzin Islands were struck it is likely that the number of dead at Biorka was also great.

With stabilization of community life under the RA Company, the population began a gradual recovery. An 1852 publication listed 2,300 Aleuts from Unimak to Attu, but omitted the Pribilof Islands and settlements on and near the Alaska Peninsula.⁴⁸ A decade later, the Unalaska district was credited with having 1,862 residents while the western islands' population was 530, making a total for the Aleutian region of 2,392.⁴⁹ An 1867 census from Innokentii Shaiashnikov, the priest at Unalaska, gave a total of 2,493 (adding RA Company figures for Attu and Atka).⁵⁰ In other words, the region experienced a slight population growth in final decades of the Russian period.

Although the number of residents was gradually increasing, there was a significant and enduring loss in the number of villages. By 1840 the profusion of small subsistence villages united by kinship ties were consolidating into centers for trade and commerce as the requirements for sustainability changed. As an example, consider the villages on Unalaska Island.⁵¹ There were said to have been twenty-four when the Russians first arrived.⁵² Baranov listed sixteen in 1790; Billings recorded fifteen two years later. Veniaminov listed ten in his table in the *Notes* (plus two additional small villages mentioned in his journals). More serious than the numerical decline was the loss of villages with populations large enough to assure continuation. In all three lists there were two to four villages with male populations of ten or lower. These were villages soon to disappear. Of villages with between eleven and twenty-one males there were nine in 1790, four in 1792, and six in 1840. The greatest change occurred in the number of larger villages, those with over twenty-two male inhabitants. There were five in 1790, ranging from thirty-five to fifty; the largest of these were Makushin and Chernofski. In 1792 there were seven villages where the number of males ranged from twenty-six to forty-five, with Makushin and Chernofski again the largest. However, by 1840 there was only one village with more than twenty-two male residents: Iliuliuk (Unalaska) with ninety. In other words, by 1840 moderately sized villages had disappeared leaving only one steadily expanding settlement. Would Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega soon go the way of so many other villages?

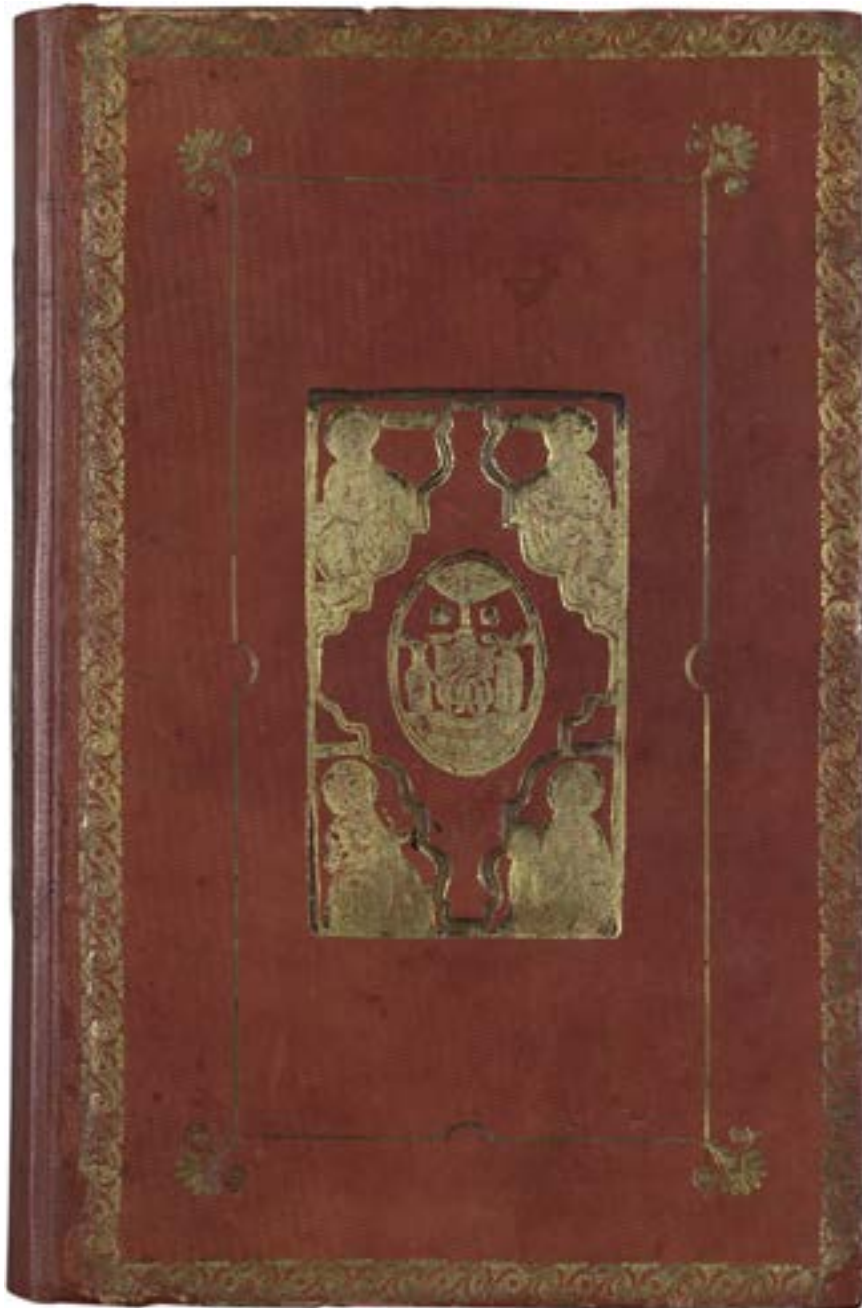
48 Teben'kov, Atlas, 77, 82, 84, 85.

49 Tikhmenev, A History of the Russian-American Company, 402-409. Numerous villages are omitted from this account and his inflated figure for the small village of Imagnia ("about 368") must lump several villages into one.

50 Davidson, Report, 221-222.

51 Sedanka Island is not included because the 1790 population for Biorka is difficult to ascertain. If Baranov called it Usetinskoe, it had 15 adult males; if he called it Boreshke, it had 10. There were 16 adult males in the Billings' census, plus 5 minor males. Veniaminov listed 17 men and 27 women in the table in his Notes.

52 Veniaminov, Notes, 90.



[*The Gospel of St. Matthew*](#) translated from Russian into Unangam tunuu by Ioann Veniaminov, 1840. Repository: National Library of Russia.
Digitized by World Digital Library.

Chapter 5

Ends and Beginnings



Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka waited more than a decade after Veniaminov left the Aleutians in 1834 before building their first chapels. The early priest was effusive in praising his parishioners' devotion to orthodoxy. Chapels had been constructed at Atka, Nikolski, and Unalaska during the first decade of the 19th century, and churches had followed in the 1820s at Unalaska, St. Paul, and Atka. So why had it taken so long for chapels to appear in the three villages? Unlike larger population centers, these smaller villages had neither the resources nor the leadership for such projects. Early in the century, Atka and Nikolski had Unanga¹ who were literate and in positions of relative authority where they could initiate projects and recruit workers. Unalaska's chapel had been constructed through the efforts of the local manager of the Russian-American Company. The subsequent churches at Unalaska and Atka were constructed during tenures of priests while that on St. Paul was initiated by Kas'ian Shaiashnikov, an influential Unanga² manager for the Russian-American Company. Veniaminov's installment as bishop of Alaska in December 1840 and his return to the territory the following summer focused attention on the smaller communities that he knew so well.¹ Another factor may have been encouragement for such construction by officers and managers of the Russian-American Company as it came under increased scrutiny during its third and last charter, received in 1844.² The most significant factor, however, was that by the mid-1840s the generation educated during Veniaminov's ministry in the islands had reached adulthood. A cadre of young men was available to initiate construction of local chapels as a natural extension of Orthodoxy into villages. Just as important, literacy had become comparatively widespread and there were now Unanga² who could serve as readers and *starostas*, or church wardens, and who could conduct services

1 Black points out that previous to his installation as bishop, church officials had discouraged the building of village chapels as "unnecessary proliferation" at a time when they could not be staffed by clergy. Black, Ivan Pan'kov, 21, note 18.

2 For the alliance between the church and the Russian-American Company during Veniaminov's years as bishop, see Vinkovetsky, *Russian America*, 154-163, 168-180.

throughout most of the liturgical year when a priest was absent. Among Unangaꝯ employed by the Russian-American Company—whether classified as Aleut, creole, or islanders—were Abraham, Maxim, and Andrew Yatchmenev, Ivan and Stephan Kriukov, Iakov Kudrin, Joseph Petelin, Gregory Petukhov, and Alexei Makarin. Once again, however, detailed information is lacking. We do not know, for example, why Joseph Petelin was stationed at Makushin and Alexei Makarin at Biorka. Perhaps their wives were from those villages; perhaps they themselves had ancestral ties to those locations. Nor do we know the familial ties, if any, between men with the same surnames. Some of these men lived out their lives in the villages; others retired to Iliuliuk (Unalaska). Several of them married more than once and their complex families in succeeding generations were found in multiple villages.

The first village chapel in the eastern Aleutians was the Chapel of the Dormition of the Mother of God on Akun, built in 1843 by Chief Ivan Pan'kov “with comrades.”³ Gregory Golovin, Veniaminov's successor at Unalaska, consecrated it the following year, shortly before his position was filled by Andrei P. Sizoi, a native of Irkutsk.⁴ Pan'kov was also instrumental in the construction in 1844 of the chapel on Tigalda consecrated in the name of St. Ioann Listvinnik. Construction of both the Chapel of the Epiphany of Our Lord at Chernofski and the Chapel of the Transfiguration at Kashega was initiated in 1848.⁵ Abraham Yatchmenev, who had worked for the RA Company since the 1830s, served as the baidarshchik at Kashega and when the chapel was completed in 1850 he became the starosta. He had married Lukerya Tcheripanoff in 1830, and at least eight of their ten children lived to maturity.⁶ Iakov Kudrin was another Unangaꝯ at Kashega who worked for the RA Company. In 1850 he married Marianne Semyonova Petelin and they had two children, Nicholas (born in 1855) and Elena (born in 1859).⁷ Two younger Kudrin men, Ioann and Joseph, also had families at Kashega.

The Chapel of St. Nicholas at Biorka was dedicated in 1855. This chapel was under the direction of Alexei Makarin, yet another Unangaꝯ employee of the RA Company in the 1830s.⁸ Among his children was Terentii Makarin, born in 1854, who became a sea otter hunter and, in 1889, the father of Andrew Makarin.

A record of icons suggests Makushin may have had a chapel as early as 1846, although the first known inventory for the Chapel of St. Gregory was made May 14, 1853, by Father Innokentii Shaiashnikov and witnessed by Gregory Petukhof and Joseph Petelin. Both the Petukhof and Petelin families had long-established ties to the Russian-American Company. Gregory had served the

3 Black, Ivan Pan'kov, 31.

4 Kedrovsky, “Historical and Statistical Description,” *Russian-Orthodox American Messenger*. Vol. 1, No. 22, 1896:465.

5 Smith, *A Sure Foundation*, 25.

6 Grinev, *Kto Est Kto*, 635.

7 Grinev, *Kto Est Kto*, 273.

8 Grinev, *Kto Est Kto*, 320.

company aboard ships in California and at New Archangel before marrying a woman from Unalaska. He died in 1865. Although he had a son, also named Gregory, who became a noted iconographer in Sitka, it was probably the elder Petukhof who resided at Makushin. The extended Petelin family had roots on Kodiak Island. Joseph Petelin was born on Unalaska in 1825 and worked for the Russian-American Company. He and his wife, Liubov [Lubova] Borenin, had a large family (at least five sons and five daughters). Petelins resided at Makushin throughout the 19th century.⁹ In an important 1878 census, Joseph Petelin's family is listed first, followed by that of Gregory Petukhof—suggesting the two men held leadership positions, perhaps first and second chiefs.¹⁰



Chapel of the Dormition of the Mother of God at Attu. ASL-P277-008-027, Wickersham State Historic Sites Photograph Collection.

These chapels, sometimes described as “wooden,” were probably modified barabaras. Rough plank boards provided the sides of the building while the roof was a modification of beams and sod found in the barabaras Unangaꝯ were so adept at constructing. They were perhaps much like buildings at Unalaska

9 For material on Petelin families, see Maria Jarlsdotter Enckell's "[Commonly Known Finnish and Baltic Names Found in the Index to Baptisms, Marriages, and Deaths in the Archives of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in Alaska 1816-1866.](#)" Recovered March 23, 2012.

10 Household census prepared by Alfred Greenbaum, general agent of the Alaska Commercial Company at Unalaska, from church records supplied by Innokentii Shaiashnikov, March 20, 1878. Alaska Commercial Company Records 1868-1911, box 152, folder 1578. Archives of the Arctic and Polar Regions Collections of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. [Hereafter, 1878 household census UAF.]

described in 1868 as “plank sided...with thatched roof.”¹¹ The frequently photographed Chapel of the Dormition of the Mother of God at Attu was of such construction.

As the century neared its midpoint, the RA Company once again shuffled its administrative centers. Decentralization in the eastern Aleutians occurred as the manager of the Unalaska district became subordinate to the Novo-Arkhangel'sk office.¹² Between 1846 and 1847 the western district of the Russian-American Company was disbanded and individual settlements that comprised that district—Atka, Attu, Amchitka, Bering, and Mednoi—fell under the direct jurisdiction of New Archangel (Sitka).¹³ A similar reorganization occurred at Unalaska. What this meant was that “instead of offices and their staff in Unalaska and Atka there now were managers of Unalaska, Unga and Atka subordinate to the Novo-Arkhangel'sk office.”¹⁴ The Unalaska manager, responsible for villages including Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega, from 1848 to 1865 was Emel'ian Vlasov.¹⁵

Governor M.D. Teben'kov had the territory surveyed between 1848 and 1850. The Teben'kov atlas and its accompanying *Hydrographic Notes* owe much to Alaska Native sailors and craftsmen.¹⁶ While none of our three villages appear on these charts, two of them are mentioned in the *Hydrographic Notes*. Makushin was said to be at latitude 53° 48' 5” and longitude 166° 51' 0”. Biorka was given a less precise location, “on the NW side of the island.” Interestingly, the *Hydrographic Notes* state that “Secha” was still in existence “on the opposite shore” while Bobrovskoe in Deep Bay is not mentioned.¹⁷ Sechinskoe, between Ugadaga and Agamgik bays, had never been large but had the advantage of being located at a fine red salmon stream and in the late 1840s it may have been primarily a summer fish camp. Before long, however, only Biorka was left from among the former complex of villages in the Beaver Inlet region. Apart from Biorka, none of these small villages is known to have constructed a chapel. For various reasons, the RA Company encouraged village consolidations, at times enforcing it and always welcoming such consolidation when done voluntarily.

In 1848 Innokentii Shaiashnikov became the priest for the eastern Aleutians and the Pribilof Islands. He oversaw chapels at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega (along

11 An inventory made by the Russian commissioner Alexei Pestchouroff on June 2, 1868. The church property contained the church itself, two “plank sided” houses for assistants to the priest, a third house, a vegetable garden and the cemetery at the corner of the bay. Alaska Commercial Company Records 1868-1911, box 152, folder 1574a. Archives of the Arctic and Polar Regions Collections of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library at the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

12 Alekseev, *The Destiny of Russian America*, 274.

13 Black, *Atka*, 103-104.

14 Alekseev, *The Destiny of Russian America*, 274.

15 Pierce, *Russian America*, 529.

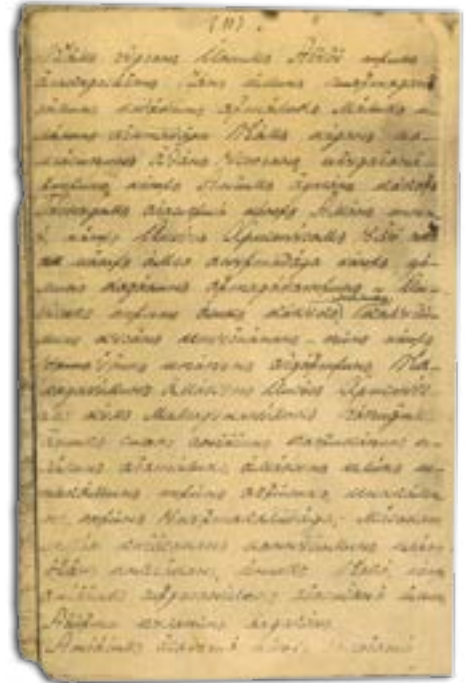
16 Pierce, *Russian America*, 209, 439, 505. Vasilii Salamatov and Illarion Arkhimandritov, both of Unanga descent and noted seamen, conducted surveys while Mikhail Kadin, of Atkan descent, drew charts for the atlas, and Grigorii Terent'ev engraved them on copper. Teben'kov, *Atlas*, xii.

17 Teben'kov, *Atlas*, 72, 74.

with other villages) until his death in 1883 at the age of 59. Born in 1824 and raised on St. Paul Island, he was directed into church service by his father, Kas'ian Shaiashnikov, the manager of sealing operations on St. Paul. After an apprenticeship with Iakov Netsvetov both at Atka and the Kvikhpakh mission at Ikogmiut (Russian Mission), he was ordained following a trip to Sitka where he married Mariia Alekseev, the daughter of Nicholai Alekseev, the RA Company manager at Unalaska from 1832 to 1847. One of several Unangaġ girls sent to the capital of Russian America to be educated, she lived with a high-ranking officer of the company, Johann vonBartram, and his wife, Margaretha.¹⁸ The young priest became an ardent and effective pastor. He trained sub-clergy and conducted schools. He translated scriptures into *Unangam tunuu*. His earliest extant translation, the Gospel of Mark, is dated Jan. 12, 1860.¹⁹ Around 1870 he made extensive retranslations of all four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. These were not, however, published until the turn of the century and even then only in part. He translated a lengthy article, "Short Rules for the Conduct of a Godly Life," which was also published posthumously. He was, as a contemporary wrote, "both a temporal and spiritual guide."²⁰

A page from Innokentii Shaiashnikov's "Short Rules for the Conduct of a Godly Life" written by Andrew Makarin in long-hand Unangam tunuu. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

The new priest must have thrown himself into his duties with the vigor and enthusiasm that had recommended him to Netsvetov and Veniaminov. Only four years after ordination, he was awarded a silver medal of the order of St. Anne for the "zeal" with which he undertook his duties²¹. In addition to rendering assistance to the construction of village chapels, he oversaw a school, initiated by Veniaminov, in which he both taught and supervised sub-clergy as teachers. Mariia Shaiashnikov was the language arts instructor for about fifteen years beginning in 1848.²² While literacy was concentrated at Iliuliuk, it had also spread to smaller villages. "Every Aleut on the island of Unalaska is literate," wrote a visitor in 1860.²³



In May 1851 Nikolai Rozenberg, chief manager, reported that all the company buildings at Unalaska were dilapidated and Unangaġ dwellings were "very dilapidated."

The board walls inside the yurts and the roofs under the grass covering are rotten. Rain and dampness penetrate into the yurts from everywhere. For lack of firewood, it is impossible to dry out the yurts by heating them.... The

18 For more on the vonBartrams, Maria Alekseev, and Finns in Alaska, see the work of Maria Jarlsdotter Enckell, including Transfigurations.
 19 Bergsland, Aleut Dictionary, xl.
 20 Alaska Herald, February 12, 1874.
 21 This medal is in the Alaska State Museums collection, accession number 2005-21-1.
 22 September 4, 1863. Journal 1861-1863, I. Shaiashnikov, priest, Unalaska. Bancroft Library, MSS P-K 209.
 23 Golovin, The End of Russian America, 61.

consequences of this condition of the company and Aleut buildings and dwellings is very apparent: spoilage of goods, provisions, and furs, and what is still worse, ruining of the health of the inhabitants of Unalaska, both Russian and Aleut.²⁴

We do not know what conditions were like at the three villages, but at Atka and on the Pribilof Islands things were said to be even worse.

“...all the buildings on Atka without exception are in incomparably worse condition than on Unalaska,” the report said. The company asked former Governor Teben’kov to respond. “On the islands the native inhabitants lived and live without demanding the least care for themselves in respect to lodging,” he wrote. “Lumber and conveniences are needed for Russians and the russified, which is fulfilled as possible.”²⁵ In 1850 he had sent 112 logs to Unalaska to be used in construction. Carpenters, he wrote, were not needed because local men could do the building when not hunting sea otters. Buildings should be constructed from local materials, “unfired bricks (with grass), banking the building with earth, clay, and sod” because it will never be possible to deliver the quantity of lumber required.

The church built by Veniaminov was also in need of major repairs. Shaiashnikov received permission to replace the structure and construction commenced in 1853. The new church was not completed and consecrated, however, until 1858.²⁶ Just as they would do forty years later when the church was again rebuilt,

the smaller villages within the parish supported construction through whatever donations they were able to make.

Village chapels also fell victim to Aleutian weather. A particularly dramatic example occurred in 1861 when Shaiashnikov visited Chernofski. In October he and his companions took two three-hatch baidarkas and trekked overland to Makushin Bay. Bypassing Makushin Village, they arrived at Kashega on October 5 where stormy weather confined them for eleven days. During this time, in addition to regular church services, he worked on his translation of “Short Rules for the Conduct of a Godly Life.” For eleven days bad weather kept them in the village, until, finally, they reached Chernofski. Their attempt to cross to Umnak, however, was thwarted by storms and they returned to Chernofski where the



First Page of the Gospel of St. Matthew by Innokentii Shaiashnikov. Russian (right); translation in *Unangam tunuu* (left). Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

24 Arndt and Pierce, *A Construction History of Sitka*, 213-214.

25 Arndt and Pierce, *A Construction History of Sitka*, 219.

26 Isaac Anderson to Nicolai Resef, June 7, 1886, Russian Church Collection, box D-49. The year building began was found in records kept by Rev. Resef.

wind tore the roof off the Chapel of the Epiphany of Our Lord. Unanga rushed to cover the structure with canvas and whatever material they could find.



A later view of the church at Unalaska built under Father Innokentii Shaishnikov. U.S. Custom's house on right. Alaska and Polar Regions Collections, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks UAF-1958-1026-481 Charles E. Bunnell Collection.

The priest reached Kashega at the end of the month, where weather prevented people from even securing food. On the 8th he set off for Makushin. The wind rose; snow flurries obscured their route and they camped on the beach, forced to gather kelp for nourishment. At last they reached what was called “Old Harbor,” the area inside Makushin Bay where a village had once existed. Setting off on foot, they arrived at the village at Volcano Bay hoping the RA Company employee who lived there would have food he could share. Neither the agent, probably either Gregory Petukhof or Joseph Petelin, nor the local people could supply anything more than a small quantity of dried fish. On the 13th he began the long trip down Makushin Bay by baidarka and then overland to Unalaska.

Population statistics collected from Shaiashnikov by George Davidson in the summer of 1867, the year of the Alaska purchase, show a sizeable population still existed east of Iliuliuk, even though the villages in the Krenitzin Islands and on the eastern side of Unalaska Island continued to wither away.²⁷ Biorka and Akutan—once Akutan was established in 1876 or 1877—gradually became the primary villages in the area.

Populations in 1867

	Male	Female	Total
Biorka	43	42	85
Akun	50	49	99
Avatanak	22	23	45
Tigalda	21	22	43
Total	136	136	272

²⁷ Davidson, *Coast Pilot of Alaska*, 52-53.

Makushin and Kashega remained part of a complex that included Chernofski.

Populations in 1867

	Male	Female	Total
Makushin	23	26	49
Kashega	36	33	69
Chernofski	33	29	62
Totals	92	88	180

Iliuliuk, with small settlements in nearby Morris Cove and on Hog Island, dominated the region with over 360 residents.

By the time the RA Company left Alaska, many Unanga viewed themselves as integral parts of the tapestry of Russian America. They had been educated by the company and had found roles within it as navigators, company agents, clerks and priests.²⁸ Although all Unanga were grouped together as “dependent” or “civilized tribes,” there was a vast difference between villagers in Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega and those residents of Sitka or Unalaska who had economic, educational, administrative, and cultural ties to Russia and the RA Company. Villagers may have been literate and had strong attachments to the Orthodox church, but their lives centered on subsistence and sea mammal hunting. Their economy and culture were tied to the Bering Sea and the North Pacific Ocean. They were more dependent on the sea and land than on any European government or economy and they could survive well if they never again saw a trader or an official. A good example was found at Biorka where in 1869 traditional whaling was still practiced. When Captain John A. Henriques, commanding the Revenue Cutter *Lincoln*, visited in 1869, the village had just landed a whale. “At the village of Biurka...I saw forty-three persons cutting and carrying a whale—young and old, male and female, while a boy of maybe ten years of age was sitting in the whale’s mouth eating fatty portions of the tongue, his one garment completely saturated with oil, hatless, shoeless, but seemingly one of the happy ones of this world.” He referred to Unanga as “this truly wonderful people” and considered their character “astounding.”²⁹

Although the Alaska treaty was signed on March 30, 1867, the implementation of the transfer occurred over a period of several months and was not completed

28 Grinev, “Social Mobility,” 21-38.

29 Henriques, John A. “Alaska: Facts about the New Northwest. Statement to the Kirtland Society of Natural Sciences.” NARA, MF 720, Alaska File of the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, 1868-1903. Roll 25: Misc. Records.

until after the 1867 summer sea otter hunt. The sale initiated an economic boom for Aleutian villages because it lifted restrictions the RA Company had set on sea otter hunting. Hunters were now free to take as many animals as they wished. The 1868 summer hunt also went as scheduled. During the twenty years from 1842 to 1861, the company had taken a total of 18,536, or a little over 900 each year.³⁰ In marked contrast, the years 1868-1870 saw a staggering 12,208 sea otters taken in the territory. They sold for \$1,220,800 in London.³¹ The breaks were soon applied, however, and on July 27, 1868, the Fortieth Congress extended the laws of customs, commerce and navigation to Alaska and placed enforcement under the Treasury Department. It specifically outlawed the killing of “any otter, mink, marten, sable, or fur seal, or other fur-bearing animal.” This was primarily intended to protect the Pribilof Island fur seals from decimation by voraciously competing firms. Ten days later, Treasury Secretary Hugh McCulloch issued his own order prohibiting the killing of all fur-bearing animals, including sea otters.

As the 1869 sea otter hunt was about to begin, Captain Charles Bryant and Dr. Hugh Henry McIntyre, both special agents of the Treasury Department, were in the Aleutians. They understood the impact McCulloch’s order would have on communities and therefore allowed Unalaska to hunt sea otters as to prohibit this “would create much suffering among the natives.” The pelts, however, had to be retained by the fur traders pending a decision by the Treasury Department or Congress. Hunting continued at full speed. According to Frank M. Brown, deputy Collector of Customs at Unalaska, during December 1869 alone Unalaska hunters delivered to different traders 18 sea otters, 66 fur seals, 47 red fox, 1 black fox, and 16 cross fox skins.³²

What this meant for Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin must be inferred from reports that center on Unalaska (Iliuliuk), Attu and Atka. “I first visited these people in 1868, the year after the purchase [as a 1st lieutenant aboard the *Wayanda* under Captain J. W. White],” wrote George W. Bailey in 1879 during his last visit to Unalaska. He was captain of the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Rush*. “Then many of the old rules and customs governing them were still adhered to,” he continued, referring to the limits the RA Company had placed on sea otter hunting,

but, as soon as the different trading companies came among them, there was of course a competition for the trade. The price of furs went up to a ruinous figure for the traders, only the wealthiest ones being now left to continue the trade. The people consequently reaped the harvest. Money was plenty with them, and everything for sale in the way of life’s luxuries was indulged in by them. This naturally introduced an entire change in their mode of living, the good times continuing sufficiently long to create certain wants never before known. They adopted the European

30 Elliott, *A Report Upon the Conditions*, 52.

31 Cobb, *The Commercial Fisheries of Alaska in 1905*, 31.

32 Brown, Frank M., Deputy Collector of Customs, letter December 31, 1869, to Frank N. Wicker, Special Agent Treasury Department, Sitka. NARA, RG 36, box 423.

style of dress, began to furnish their houses with articles never before considered necessary, thinking no doubt...that the improvement in their condition would be permanent.³³

As a result of their 1869 visits, Bryant and McIntyre submitted reports that were at odds with each other. Confusion was indeed rampant. William Healey Dall found Unanga were “in a state of bewilderment.”³⁴ General George H. Thomas wrote that people “did not know who or what to believe, nor what their rights and privileges were.”³⁵ This was repeated in a statement given to Illarion Arkhimandritov, a former captain for the RA Company and a man of Unanga descent; Mariia Shaiashnikov was his niece. He was an experienced navigator who had been born in 1820 on St. George Island. He had attended Veniaminov’s school at Unalaska and had a distinguished career aboard RA Company vessels. After the sale he became a supporter of the Alaska Commercial Company. In October 1868 he collected petitions from Unalaska and the Pribilof Islands. The islands mentioned in the Unalaska document encompassed the traditional hunting grounds of the eastern Aleut and included Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka.

Captain I. I. Archimandritoff—

We hereby request you to protect the interests of all the people living on and around the island of Unalashka and the neighboring islands as far west as the island “Umnak” and North East as far as the islands “Akoon, Tigalda, Avootanak, Unimak, and Unga”.

Everything is wrong in our parts and there is no order at all on the island of Unalashka since the Americans arrived. Our interests are in danger and we request the Government to put a stop to the molestations of different Companies of Americans who arrive here. We also beg you to put before the government a petition that it should reserve to us our trade and fisheries.

*Your obedient servant,
Toien Kondroity Kutchutine
October 19, 1868³⁶*

The 1868 regulations were amended on July 1, 1870, under a new and frequently recycled title: “An Act to prevent the Extermination of Fur-bearing Animals in Alaska.” Later that summer, this revision led to the lease of the Pribilof Islands to the AC Company for twenty years. The law was further refined to address the prohibition against distilled liquor (wine and beer were permitted) and the

33 Bailey, Condition of Affairs, 16.

34 Dall to B.W. Evermann, U.S. Bureau of Fisheries, December 7, 1910. NARA, RG 22, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, file 290.

35 Report of Major General George H. Thomas. House Executive Document, 1 September 1869. Serial 1412:117

36 NARA, MF 720, Alaska File of the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, 1868-1903. Roll 2. The statement from St. Paul was dated October 12, 1868, and the one from St. George was dated April 18, 1869. Kondroity Kutchutine was listed on an 1878 census at Unalaska, age 54.

importation of firearms. The AC Company, however, was allowed to bring guns and ammunition to the Pribilofs. Their use was forbidden when harvesting fur seals or hunting sea otters from June through October. From 1873 to 1875 approximately 2,500 sea otters were secured each year. On July 3, 1875, the acting Treasury secretary banned rifles but this did nothing to reduce the number of otters taken. In fact, the overall catch increased.³⁷

In 1868 sea otter pelts had brought between \$22.50 and \$55.00 (prime brown to prime dark silver) on the market.³⁸ In 1870 Unalaska hunters received between \$15 and \$35 for each of the 300 to 400 sea otters taken.³⁹ In 1872 “a good hunter” secured “from five hundred to a thousand dollars worth of skins.”⁴⁰ Biorka, in particular, seems to have benefited from this economic boom. Unfortunately, the best eyewitness report for conditions there, made near the end of this brief period of prosperity, came from the worst possible witness: Ivan Petroff. His notoriety stems from the documents he fabricated with maniacal regularity during and after his 1878 visit to Alaska when he collected information for the 10th U.S. census and for the history of Alaska that was being assembled by Hubert Howe Bancroft. A logbook kept by Unalaska agents at the AC Company confirms Petroff’s visit to Biorka on September 9-10, 1878. He described the village as “a prosperous little settlement”⁴¹ with a “neat church, and store, and comfortable dwellings, nestling on a strip of sandy beach, hemmed in on three sides by towering cliffs....”⁴² He attributed the success of the village, not to income from sea otter hunting, but to the local trader.

The strange and subtle influence of the method and manner of living practiced by an old trader who was and is their leader, one Gregory Krukoff, is strikingly illustrated there to-day. This man and his wife are singularly neat in their manner of living; they keep everything clean about them, and in the summer decorate their house tastefully with wild flowers. The natives, under the influence of his example, are living in their barrabaras, the neatest and cleanest of their people in all Alaska. They are living so without an exceptional instance, every house being as orderly and as tidy as its neighbor. They put large windows into their barrabaras, sand and scrub the floors, and their furniture, their beds, and window-panes tidy and bright, while pots and tumblers filled with wild flowers stand on the tables and window-sills.⁴³

Gregory Krukoff was a grandson of Ivan Krukoff [Kriukov], the old voyager who had recruited Veniaminov in 1822. Ivan’s son, Stefan, had held positions with

37 Hooper, A Report on the Sea-Otter Banks, 16.

38 Alaska Herald, December 1, 1868.

39 Buynitsky, S.N., Investigation of the Fur-Seal and Other Fisheries of Alaska. 50th Congress, 2nd Session. House Report No. 3883. 1889:4.

40 Alaska Herald, June 9, 1872.

41 Hinckley, “Ivan Petroff’s Journal,” 35.

42 Petroff, “An Alaskan Centennial.”

43 Petroff, Population and Resources, 21.

the RA Company in the Pribilof Islands and been their manager at Nikolski. In 1849 he was appointed paramount chief for the Unalaska district.⁴⁴ Stefan's son, Gregory, was born in 1828 and entered company service at a young age and, working out of the Unalaska office, eventually became their agent at Biorka. After the sale, the AC Company hired as many former employees of the RA Company as possible, and Gregory was one of these. His first wife, Evdokiia Petikoff, had died in 1870 and a few months later he married Anna Mukhoplev. In 1878 his household consisted of himself, his wife, his twenty year-old son Lazar, and Lazar's wife. On October 30, 1879, Krukoff wrote to the general agent of the AC Company at Unalaska that he was sending \$46.55 (in dollars) to Father Innokentii Shaiashnikov on behalf of Biorka village and its chapel. Henry W. Elliott was in the Aleutians in the early 1870s. His description of Biorka, however, is derivative, owing many of its details to Petroff while inserting his own peculiar disdain for Unanga.⁴⁵ By the time he published the popular *Our Arctic Province* in 1886, Gregory Krukoff had died.

One of the mysteries surrounding the three villages is the dramatic population increase at Biorka in the years immediately after the sale of Alaska. From 85 residents in 1867, the community mushroomed to 141 by 1878. Fortunately, we have the 1878 household census compiled by Alfred Greenbaum, the AC Company general agent at Unalaska, to compare with Petroff's 1880 census, both of whom received data from Innokentii Shaiashnikov. As dramatic as the Biorka increase might seem, the regional population actually declined by about nine percent.

Population change between 1867 and 1878

	1867	1878 Greenbaum	1878 Petroff	Loss or Gain Greenbaum/ Petroff
Biorka	85	141	139	+38/+54
Akutan		86	63	+86/+63
Akun	85	53	54	-33/-31
Avatanak	99	15	19	-84/-80
Tigalda	43			-43
Total	312	295	275	-17/-37

Continual movement between villages is reflected in the 1879 census George Bailey received from Shaiashnikov in which there are seven residents identified with Tigalda (supposedly completely abandoned by 1878). Whatever the exact numbers, Akun, Avatanak, and Tigalda were clearly in decline while Biorka and the newly established Akutan were growing. Moves to and from a village

44 Pierce, *Russian America*, 269. Grinev, *Kto Est Kto*, 272.

45 Elliott, *Our Arctic Province*, 177.

were determined by a number of factors including available dwelling sites and materials, proximity (Akun is relatively close to Akutan), and the wish to retain family ties within a settlement. Lacking year-to-year changes for these villages, the impact of the establishment of the modern village of Akutan cannot be ascertained. The fact that it was established as a commercial center for the AC Company and the Western Fur and Trading Company may suggest that people who wished to have less contact with such businesses may have settled at Biorka.

Makushin and Kashega's populations, along with Chernofski's, increased by 25 percent. One factor may have been the reduction in infant mortality due to the relative prosperity of the 1870s.

Population change between 1867 and 1878

	1867	1878 Greenbaum	1878 Petroff	1878-Children 12 and under
Makushin	49	59	61	20
Kashega	69	76	73	18
Chernofski	62	86	98	24
Total	180	221	232	62

While the number of Russians in the territory had never been large, the years following the purchase saw a steady influx of white hunters, most frequently in communities along the Alaska Peninsula, where they used rifles, ignored accepted rules of behavior around sea otter sanctuaries, and temporarily married local women in order to be classified as “native hunters.” The sea otter population was reduced. In October 1876 Unangā hunters from several villages met at Unalaska, probably in preparation for leaving on the winter hunting party. A petition was drafted in which they stressed that sea otter hunting was their “sole means of procuring bread and clothes.” They acknowledged the “great injury” hunting with rifles had done to otter populations, noting that its prohibition had come too late. Specific charges were made against white hunters who had infiltrated the hunting grounds during the previous two years. In contrast to Unangā who showed “great care and caution,” outsiders cruised the area in schooners, made fires on beaches, disrupted the otters’ breeding grounds, and hunted with rifles. Written by Father Innokentii Shaiashnikov, the petition was sent to the Secretary of the Treasury with signatures of thirty-five men from several villages.

Therefore we, zealous to sustain ourselves, turn to Your Excellency, that you with your sentinels enforce caution and care upon those schooners now hunting around our shores, with especial reference to the sea otter grounds of the Shumagin Islands, Saanack and Oomanak,

and protect these animals from the use of fire arms when hunting them, and also that vessels unless in distress shall not anchor on these grounds except such schooners as may carry our hunting parties to and from these places with all the requisite care and caution, like for instance those of the Alaska Commercial Company.⁴⁶

Enforcement of any regulations, however, was nonexistent. In 1875 the only Revenue Service cutter in Alaska, the *Wolcott*, had been restricted to southeast Alaska. The following year, no cutter was sent to Alaska. In 1877 the *Rush* was in Alaska from April to November. When cutters intercepted sealers who were suspected of illegally taking fur seals, a thorough inspection was impossible. There was never room on the decks to break out the entire cargo consisting of provisions, sealing outfits, spare rigging, sails, blocks, the effects of the crew, etc. Rifles were easily concealed in corners of the hold, chain lockers, and storerooms. They were even stowed in the furlled sails.⁴⁷

A later eruption of Bogoslof (1910). ASL-P277-008-066, Wickersham State Historic Sites Photograph Collection.



As the second decade of U.S. rule began, residents at Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin faced a variety of problems brought on by declining sea otter populations. These difficulties, however, were minor compared with the catastrophe that overtook Makushin. Throughout 1878 volcanic activity along

46 NARA, RG 22, box 69, folder: Sea Otters 1891-1902. There is a note attached to this copy signed by Henry W. Elliott saying the original was presented to him at Unalaska on October 16, 1876 and that he delivered it to Secretary Morrill in November.

47 An unidentified extract sent to Captain C. L. Hooper, April 27, 1895, by C. S. Hamlin, Acting Secretary of the Treasury. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1839.

the chain had noticeably increased. Whalers returning south to Hawaii reported seeing “gigantic columns of smoke” as they maneuvered through passes “and copious streams of lava” descending island slopes.⁴⁸ On the last day of August, Unalaska Island was struck by a severe earthquake about two in the morning. Ivan Petroff was at Iliuliuk and two days later he wrote in his journal, “Some natives arrived at the village this morning from Makushin village with news of disaster caused by the over-flowing of rivers and lakes from volcanic action.”⁴⁹ Petroff’s unreliability has already been mentioned. Although the magazine *Nature* confirmed “an earthquake accompanied by a tidal wave totally destroyed the village of Makushin on August 29,” it is likely the information came from Petroff.⁵⁰ The extant AC Company journal (January 1, 1878 – June 30, 1879) provides no information. Nevertheless, we can be fairly certain that the village was shaken to its core because the people began tearing down their barabaras, salvaging whatever lumber they could, and constructing homes at a site just inside the bay.⁵¹

Villages along the western coast of Unalaska Island had experienced volcanic disturbances before. The most dramatic recorded occurrence had been the appearance of Bogoslof Island, northwest of Makushin, in the late 18th century. Alexander Shaiashnikov, son of Innokentii Shaiashnikov, recalled that his great-great-grandmother was about sixteen or seventeen and living at Chernofski at the time. “There was a great quaking of the earth,” he told Samuel Applegate, “and for three days and nights the atmosphere was very dark. The water in the sea was so hot that it killed all the sea eggs and fish and for some time after the people were starving.” Then he added the interesting comment, “When this disturbance was going on the people at Tchernofski who had embraced Christianity were praying to God in fear while those who had not yet done so resorted to shamanism.” Shaiashnikov also relayed information from Klement Borenin, a resident of Kashega. (The 1878 census indicates he was born in 1842.) Borenin’s grandfather “heard from old people” that near where Bogoslov arose there used to be a pinnacle rock with a small sandy beach around it, just large enough for a few baidarkas to land. Seals hauled out on the rock and when hunters from different villages arrived at the same time, the first to land were given precedence while the others had to return home. It was a favorite site for Chernofski hunters.⁵²

The new Makushin Village faced south, toward a dramatic outcropping called Cathedral Rocks. A stream at the eastern end of the beach provided fresh water. Nick Galaktionoff recalled that it was “a good place for young kids.” The beach at the village was “nothing but sand” and covered with tall wild rye where they could play for hours. “Because Makushin face south,” he said, “sunshine hit ‘em

48 *Nature*, November 14, 1878.

49 Hinckley, “Ivan Petroff’s Journal,” 33.

50 *Nature*, November 14, 1878.

51 Petroff, “The Limit of the Innuit Tribes,” 572-573.

52 Samuel Applegate to George Davidson, July 20, 1907. Alaska State Library, Historical Collections. Samuel Applegate Papers, 1892-1925. MS-3, box 1.

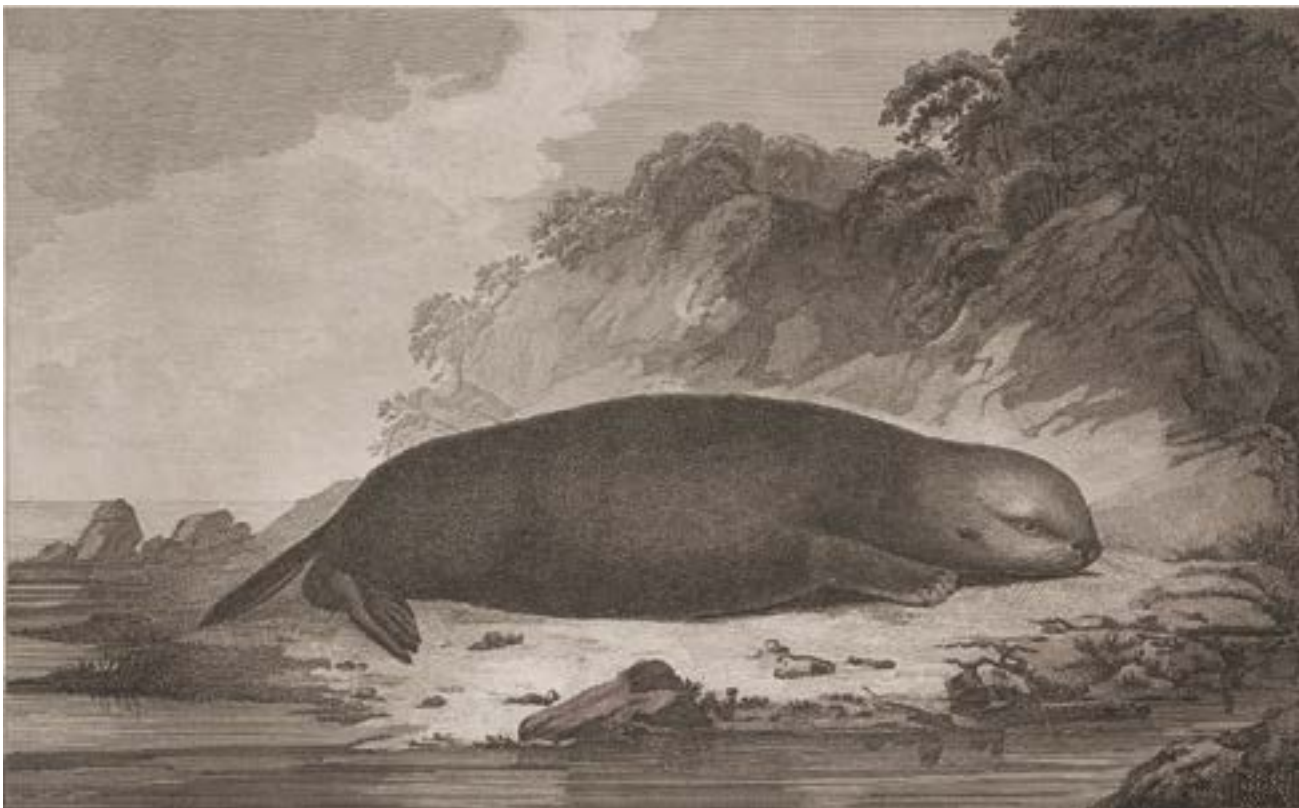
every day.”⁵³ Nick’s grandmother, Marva Petukoff, probably also played with her two sisters in the tall grass as they settled into their new village while their father, Gregory, and their older brother, Basil, worked to ready their home. The wisdom of the 1878 move was confirmed when on October 20, 1883, Bogoslof again went into action, and this time Unalaska village itself was carpeted with “vast quantities” of ash.⁵⁴

53 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 113.

54 *Daily Alta California*, 5 August 1884.



Nick Lekanoff, Sr. at Makushin beach. Photograph by Josy Shangin. Watercolor tint by Mary C. Broderick.



Sea Otter. Engraving after John Webber, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, 1780. Image courtesy Francis Broderick.

Chapter 6

The Lives of Sea Otter Hunters



The men of the “new” Makushin Village, like practically all able-bodied Unangā men, were active sea otter hunters employed by the AC Company. The reports that document the beginning of the long and irreversible decline of sea otter hunting tell us little about individuals. Among the names that do surface occasionally is that of Lazar Gordieff. He appears six times in the 1885-1889 AC Company copybook and in a few other documents. These fragmented records provide little more than shadows, but they are far more than we have for most Unangā of the late 19th century.

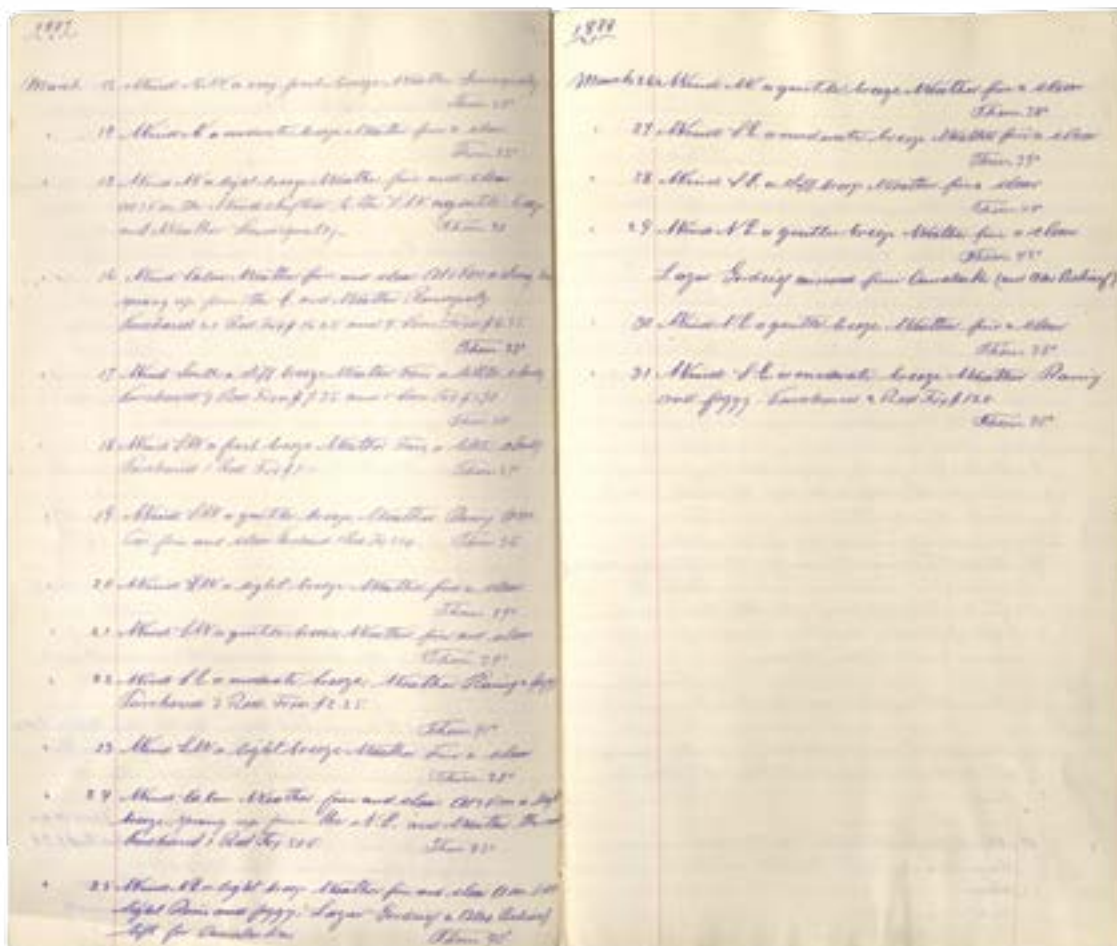
Lazar was twenty-two in 1878 and living with his widowed father, two brothers and a sister at Chernofski.¹ In a June 1885 letter from Rudolph Neumann, since 1880 the AC Company general agent at Unalaska, we learn that Lazar was given dried seal throats.² From this it can be deduced that he crafted delicate models of kayaks. The throats of fur seals, removed, cleaned, and dried during the seal harvests in the Pribilof Islands, were the preferred material for covering the intricate wooden frames. This letter went to the agent on Wosnesenski Island, in the heart of the eastern sea otter grounds, where Gordieff was part of the summer hunting party. He may have spent time between hunts carving and assembling models. A few of these trade items, all anonymous, survive in museums and testify to intimate knowledge of the kayak and to a high degree of craftsmanship.

The hunters were still away in August, but after they had returned to Unalaska in October and Neumann had gone over the records, which arrived on a subsequent ship, he discovered that Lazar owed the company \$166 while another man owed \$805. By then, both men had returned home to Chernofski.

1 1878 household census, UAF.

2 June 29, 1885, Unalaska, Letters Outgoing, Copy Book, 1885-1889 [Hereafter, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.]

“Why in h--- did you not collect from them,” an incensed Neumann demanded of the Wosnesenski agent, “on the furs which you bought and transfer their account to us.... In the future whenever a native leaves your station always send his account along by the same vessel.”³



AC Company station's log book. Chernofski, March 1887, with entry for Lazar Gordieff.

Courtesy J. Penelope Goforth, editor. *Bringing Aleutian History Home: the Lost Ledgers of the Alaska Commercial Company 1875-1897*. Unpublished transcripts produced at Anchorage, Alaska. 2011-12. ©2011 J. Penelope Goforth.

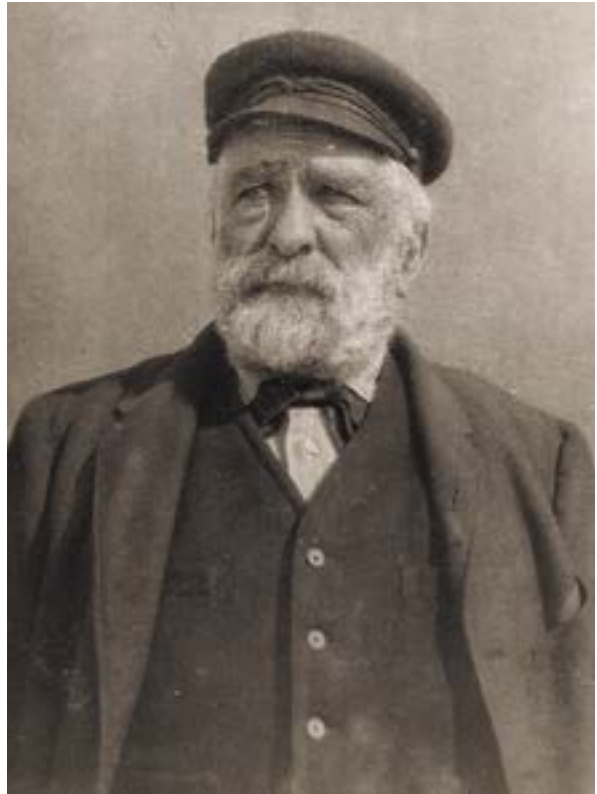
Two weeks later Lazar's debt had doubled and the general agent demanded an explanation from Adolph Reinken, his agent at Chernofski, “by return vessel.”⁴ Reinken's reply does not exist, but by January 1886 he had installed Lazar as chief, to the disgust of the general agent who refused to accept the appointment even though Lazar's father, Michael Gordieff, had been chief up until October 15. “It would seem as if you did not know how to handle your men,” he chided Reinken. “You should have reported here before installing Lazar Gordeoff and until the party comes over here on their way to Sanak you will leave Alec. Belioff [the interim chief] alone. If he does not then [sail] a new chief will be appointed here.”⁵

3 October 2, 1885, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

4 October 15, 1885, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

5 January 28, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

In April 1887 the S.S. *Dora* collected men from Chernofski, Kashega, and Makushin for the summer sea otter hunting party. Not quite a decade old, the 120-foot *Dora* was one of the company's workhorses, although, at its launching a reporter had gushed "her lines are as graceful as those of a pleasure yacht."⁶ Gordieff was probably one of the men who boarded the ship and who, with hunters from Biorka and Unalaska, were taken east to the sea otter grounds where they remained until September. That December, after he had returned home, his wife gave birth to a daughter.⁷ The next we hear about him he and Alex Beliaef [Belioff] traveled to Unalaska on March 24 and returned five days later.⁸ It is interesting that they traveled together, the interim chief and the would-be chief. Perhaps by this time they were first and second chiefs. It is likely that they were delivering winter fox pelts to the company headquarters. The summer hunting cycle was repeated in 1888 and Gordieff again hunted around Wosnesenski Island. That September, after the men had returned to Unalaska and before the *Dora* departed with them to their home villages, Neumann wrote to Reinken. He had the letter delivered by kayak so it would arrive before the steamer.



Adolph Reinken, AC Company agent at Chernofski. Gift from Henry Swanson to Ray Hudson.

"Lazar Gordieff died on Woznesenski," he informed his agent. "I forward a box with his belongings to his wife, his rifle I have retained here."⁹ This is all there is, all there ever will be. His wife was from Attu, and in August 1889 Neumann wrote to Reinken, "Let Lazar Gordieff's wife stay where she is, if she wants to go to Attou we will see about it next spring."¹⁰ Consumed by water or fever, whether he drowned or died in an epidemic that swept the area, Gordieff's short life was neither exceptional nor unusual.

The Company and Its Sea Otter Hunters

As the 1870s drew to a close, the boom that had accompanied the sale of Alaska diminished and residents in the three villages entered a period of economic decline. The Alaska Commercial Company achieved its virtual monopoly, buying or driving out smaller firms. "In a few years a change came," wrote George Bailey in his succinct 1879 summary,

6 The Daily Alta, April 8, 1880. William Healey Dall scrapbook. SIA, RU 7073, box 47, folder 3.

7 Goforth, Logbook, Tchernofski Station, May 5, 1887 – April 22, 1888.

8 Goforth, Logbook, Tchernofski Station, May 5, 1887 – April 22, 1888.

9 September 14, 1888, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

10 August 7, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

the traders of small capital went to the wall; the prices paid for furs went down to a living figure for those that remained; the hunter's profits became correspondingly less, and, in order to keep up his income, he had to be more constantly employed. This constant hunting has reduced the number of animals in some localities, and today a large proportion of these people are very poor.¹¹

The AC Company attempted to control sea otter hunting through a complicated system of recruitment and rewards. Loyal hunters were extended credit. For residents of the three villages, this meant credit at the small stores run by local agents whose account books were scrutinized by the general agent. The company was alert to any hunter who did not sell his furs to it, in which case the man's credit was cut off.¹² "Where did Dionese Kholinof get his sea otter which he gave to Tchernofski church?" Neumann asked Reinken in November 1886. "Did he bring it with him from Ounalaska?"¹³ Men were outfitted for hunting expeditions at a cost to be repaid from a successful hunt. At the same time that the company introduced wood frame housing to the Pribilofs, it built cottages at Unalaska and Belkofski for their best hunters. This was not done in any of the three villages. Mark Harrington found that the company could control its hunters with little effort. "Indeed, the Aleuts are too submissive for their own interest," he wrote. "They allow themselves to be over-ridden and abused without complaint.... Yet they are bright and intelligent, and are always trustworthy."¹⁴

Unanga hunters travelled as far south as California to procure sea mammal pelts for the Russian-American Company. Below: [Settlement Ross \(California\) by Ilya Gavrilovich Voznesenski](#). 1841, Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography, Russian Academy of Science, Petersburg.

As the AC Company strove to stay abreast of any changes in manpower, it required village agents to record births and deaths.¹⁵ "Enclosed you will find...list of natives belonging to your station," Neumann instructed Reinken, "which you will return to us in the Spring marking those natives who are dead and absent and where they are, also correct spelling of names in your ledger."¹⁶ This list included men living at both Kashega and Chernofski.



16 January 22, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

Whether hunting on their own, with partners (*angtaasaġ* and *angaayuġ*), or as members of company-sponsored hunts, men were away from their villages for longer and longer periods. Their extended absences impacted subsistence practices, most importantly in harvesting sea lions. This was nothing new. Under the Russian-American Company prolonged hunting expeditions had reduced the number of men able to procure food and subsistence materials locally, and the company had positioned itself as the distribution agent for necessities.¹⁷ The AC Company learned from that example.



“Springing the Alarm. Natives capturing Sea-Lions, Saint Paul’s Island.” H. W. Elliott. NOAA.

With exclusive rights to the Pribilof Islands, the company had crews there that harvested large numbers of sea lions, dried the meat, and prepared the throats, intestines, and hides. These hides, known as *lavtaki* (pl.) were shipped to Unalaska and disbursed by the company to villages where they were prepared as coverings for kayaks. The throats were used for the upper part of boots and the intestines were sewed into kamleikas or gut raingear. During the fur seal harvest, meat was salted, barreled, and sent to Unalaska for distribution by the company. The general agents were responsible for securing these raw materials. “I have none on hand,” Neumann wrote about sea lion hides in July 1886 to the agent at St. Paul, “and it is unnecessary for me to state, how important they are to the business down here, please ship also the intestines and throats and seal meat.”¹⁸ The following summer he wrote to St. George, “We are very short of luftak[,] intestines etc. and you will greatly oblige us by sending the above at first opportunity.”¹⁹ Uninterrupted control over the harvesting and distribution of sea lion skins gave the AC Company unchallengeable power. Dall wrote that during his first stay at Unalaska, 1871-1872, the company “had a monopoly on the sealion skins which the natives used on their skin boats.”²⁰

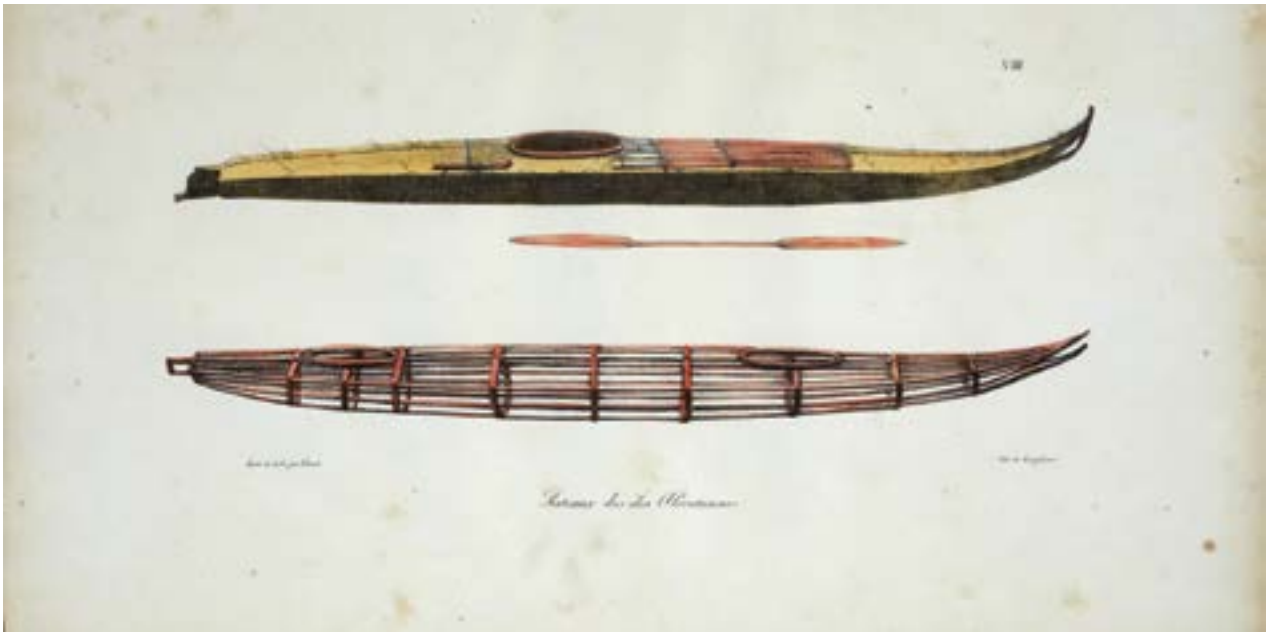
17 Luehrmann, *Alutiiq Villages*, 69-70.

18 July 1, 1886, September 14, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

19 June 7, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

20 Dall to Mrs. R. L. Nichols, November 2, 1921. SIA, RU 7073, box 5.

From the fragmentary extant records, it is possible to get a sense of the quantity of hides secured on St. Paul by the company. In 1870, 527 were sent to Unalaska for use throughout the Aleutians. Along with the hides went 34 barrels of blubber and seal oil used to soften them.²¹ “A quantity” was sent in 1872. On September 16, 1873, approximately 160 sea lions were killed on St. Paul. Again on November 26, 130 were killed. In 1875, 295 skins were delivered; in 1876, 79 were taken to Unalaska by Alfred Greenbaum; and in 1878 the Unalaska station purchased 150.²² Occasionally the Unalaska agent supplied skins to Kodiak.²³ To supplement sea lion intestines, the company requisitioned bear gut from other parts of Alaska where it had stations, such as Kodiak and St. Michael.²⁴



“Bateaux des Iles Aleoutiennes,” (Boats from the Aleutian Islands). Illustration of single-hatch skin boat and double-hatch frame executed by Ludovik (Louis) Choris between 1815-1818. From *Voyages pittoresque autour du monde...* UAF, B0083-83.

Of course, whenever possible, Unanga men hunted locally. Unfortunately, sea lion populations rose and fell and there were times when the animals were scarce. In 1872 Dall noted that sea lions were no longer found at Unalaska and 14 years later Neumann remarked to the Kodiak agent that they again were scarce.²⁵ When new skins were not available, men had to make do with what they had. “All your men that have decent bidarkas or can make them so,” Neumann wrote to the Nikolski agent, “should be ready on the arrival of the vessel to go on

21 Barnes, Winslow B. “Report of Winslow B. Barnes, Lieut., St. Paul Island, June 1870.” Seal and Salmon Fisheries and General Resources of Alaska, serial 3576:14.
 22 Transcripts of Notes 1872-1902 made from log by Walter L. Hahn, p. 228. NARA, RG 22, file 291, box 49.
 23 In 1891 Washburn at Kodiak asked Neumann at Unalaska to ship him medium weight skins as his order had not been filled by the home office. August 5, 1891, Kodiak Station, Letters, outgoing: Letter Book A, box 124, folder 1146, UAF.
 24 June 23, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.
 25 “Prehistoric Remains ... Report of Dr. W.H. Dall, U.S. Coast Survey.” Daily Evening Bulletin. (San Francisco) Nov. 6, 1872. August 17, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

a hunting party for the summer.”²⁶ Skin boat construction required specialized skills, specialized tools, and weeks of work, and the general agent tried to deliver hides to villages in the fall so the winter could be spent preparing them and getting kayaks ready by late spring for departure on the summer hunt.

Sinew for making thread was another vital commodity. Whale tendon was the preferred raw material and various grades were made for sewing skins to kayak frames and in the production of clothing. Sophie Pletnikoff of Kashega once showed me how two fine strands, torn from a hard piece of tendon, one held in each hand, were twisted together into a single cord. In 1888 the agent at Makushin was told to send to Iliuliuk all the sinew he could spare, “just keeping enough for your own Bydarkas.”²⁷ After the Makushin people found a whale in the fall of 1889, they were ordered to sell sinew to Nikolski for a dollar a pound. “Should you not be able to get the sinew,” the general agent wrote, “let Adolph Reinken know so that he may supply them.”²⁸ In February 1889 the Akutan Station sent twelve pounds of whale sinew to Unalaska.

In addition to sea lion hides—and occasionally kayaks themselves—the company supplied vital waterproof kamleikas to their hunters. In 1886 Neumann sent four kamleikas by kayak to Biorka for hunters preparing to leave on the spring hunt.²⁹ If men were successful taking local sea lions, women were expected to convert the intestines into kamleikas, either for use by local hunters or to be sold to the company.³⁰ There was a qualitative difference between boats and raingear contracted and distributed by the company and those that were made within the context of a village or extended family. Kamleikas produced for export were sometimes so poorly made that they had to be resealed.³¹ But if a woman sewed a garment for her husband or son, she would have taken great care in its manufacture.

As the 19th century ended, although Unangaġ retained extensive knowledge about skin boat construction and gut sewing, the cyclical patterns of life were falling into disarray. Sea lions and skin boats had formed a circle of subsistence: sea lions were used to cover skin boats and these kayaks were used to hunt sea lions and other game. When men no longer took sea lions for their own use, the intimate relationship between a man and his kayak diminished. It was inevitable that a hunter would feel less attachment to a purchased or loaned *iqyaġ* than to one he had crafted himself, one on which his wife or sisters had sewed the sea lion hides after piercing them with bird-bone awls, one in which he had secreted his amulets. The “mass production” of skin boats may also have contributed to the gradual coarsening of the vessel. Certainly durability became a primary concern of the commercial company who relied on a fully equipped hunting

26 March 5, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

27 February 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

28 February 16, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

29 April 7, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

30 September 29, 1885, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

31 November 25, 1885, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

force. The kayak had once been an integral part of the family, even taken inside the barabara. Now its production and use was an instrument of commerce controlled by the AC Company. The people of Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega had taken another step away from their ancestral way of life.

Pribilof Island Connections

The dried fur seal throats given to Lazar Gordieff undoubtedly originated in the Pribilof Islands. They were a very minor export when compared with sea lion skins, salted fur seal meat, and, of course, the lucrative fur seal pelts themselves. Despite stringent control by the U.S. government and domination by the AC Company, the residents of the Pribilof Islands comprised, as one visitor remarked, a western aristocracy.³² The fur seal harvest guaranteed an annual income far greater than any achieved by residents of the Aleutian chain. A comparison of income between the two Pribilof communities and Akutan shows the difference.³³ For 1886 and 1887 the average Pribilof income was about seven times that earned by an Akutan man, \$487 compared to \$74.³⁴



"Seal Drove Crossing,"
Saint Paul Island
October 20, 1872. H. W.
Elliott, UA482-2.

32 Investigation of the Fur-Seal and Other Fisheries of Alaska, 1889:xxxi.

33 Among Pribilof workers, income varied widely. In 1889 at St. Paul a first class sealer received \$627.85 while a sixth class worker got only \$251.17. The priest that year received \$1,000. The St. George chiefs were paid between \$80 and \$100 a year while the chiefs on St. Paul were paid \$300 in 1885 and \$200 for subsequent years. An 1886-1888 ledger indicates that the Unalaska harbor or port chief received an annual salary of \$1000 which was paid by hunters from Makushin, Chernofski, Kashega, Biorka and Unalaska villages. Unalaska Ledger in Russian covering the years 1886 to 1888, page 6. Possession of Larry Shaishnikoff, Unalaska, Alaska. A translation into English was made by Lydia T. Black. Copy in Ray Hudson's collection. [Hereafter, Shaishnikoff 1886-1888 ledger.]

34 Income for the Pribilofs is from Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration, Vol. V, 719, 731, 733. Akutan income is from the ACC Akutan Station Account Ledger and the Akutan Station Daily Cash Record.

By 1879 a few men from the Aleutians were allowed onto the Pribilofs to do work that fell outside the seal harvest. They earned \$1 a day or 10 cents an hour for various jobs including loading and unloading vessels and bundling furs after they had been salted. Pribilof men who could earn between \$25 and \$35 a day sealing had little incentive to work for \$1 a day. In the spring of 1882 a large number of deaths at St. Paul compelled the agent to use laborers from Unalaska.³⁵ While most of these men came from Iliuliuk, men from the three villages also found seasonal employment. In 1887 about forty men were brought to St. Paul Island to assist with the sealing. According to the special treasury agent, "The average pay of the St. Paul native sealer this year is a little over \$500, whilst the Unalaskans receive on an average \$80 each."³⁶ By 1888 between thirty-five and forty-five Unalaska men were seasonally employed. "They are taken from the poorer class at Oonalaska," said Thomas F. Morgan, "men not successful in hunting. They are usually composed of old men, too old to hunt the sea otter."³⁷ Boys found employment there also, although they were paid as little as \$15 a month.

Without a doubt, St. Paul and St. George were incomparably wealthier than villages in the chain and this condition continued for decades. In 1873 St. Paul embarked on construction of a new church, completed in 1877 at a cost to the community of \$14,000. The nine bells alone cost about \$3,000 plus another thousand for freight from Philadelphia.³⁸ The AC Company was an active participant in the building's design and construction. In contrast, a decade later when the Kashega people wanted a new chapel they recycled an abandoned building. "In regard to the Kashega people," Neumann wrote to Reinken at Chernofski (in the same letter in which he notified him of Lazar Gordieff's death), "you can let them have the building they wanted to buy at their place for a church." A letter in July 1889 shows that by "have" he meant "purchase." After the village submitted a request for items in February 1889, Neumann wrote that he would attend to it but he pointed out that the church now owed the company \$106.40. That summer he asked Reinken to itemize the church account that had grown to \$631.80.³⁹

As of August 1, 1887, the people of St. Paul and St. George had over \$94,000 in U. S. bonds in San Francisco. In 1895 the company's books held \$52,757.96 in savings for the people of St. Paul and \$3,133.51 for those of St. George.⁴⁰ (This included \$1,876.56 in a special account called the "Natives' fund for translation of Bible.") As an admittedly biased commentator remarked that same year about the Pribilof

35 Glidden, Henry A. "Preliminary report for 1882," in *Seal and Salmon Fisheries*, serial 3576, 155-156.

36 Tingle, George. "Annual Report for 1887," in *Seal and Salmon Fisheries*, serial 3576, 199.

37 *Investigation of the Fur-Seal and Other Fisheries of Alaska*, serial 2674, 80.

38 *St. Paul Island Log*, June 29, 1876, May 20, 1877.

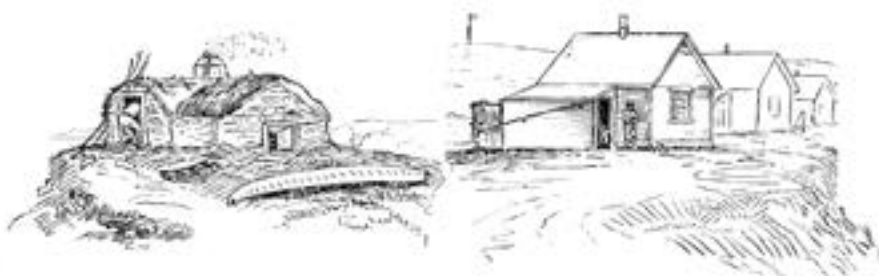
39 September 14, 1888, February 16, 1889, July 18, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

40 *Investigation of the Fur-Seal and Other Fisheries of Alaska*, serial 2674, 391-392.

Island men, "It is safe to say that no laboring men within the boundaries of the United States are better paid or better cared for."⁴¹

Everything done on the Pribilofs, however, was accompanied by controversy. In 1874-75 the company conducted a massive replacement of barabaras with wood-frame dwellings and this was seen, depending on your point of view, either as company beneficence or a ploy to gain ownership of land.⁴² In either case, the local people found the new dwellings cold and difficult to heat.⁴³ Subject to the whims of government and company agents, men who were both benign and venal, the residents endured what amounted to decades of congressionally sanctioned forced labor. As the titles of two books on the Pribilof Islands suggest, the people were "slaves of the harvest" who endured "a century of servitude." The islands were an unusual prison, however, for it was one where people fought to remain and that others struggled to enter.

Detail from "The Sea-Lion Hunt on Pribylov Islands." Images from left to right: "... bidarrahs covered with sea-lion skins; sealers' houses." H. W. Elliott. NOAA.



Although harvesting fur seals was the exclusive right of the AC Company in the Pribilof Islands, during the 1880s fur seals appeared in lists of furs sold by hunters from Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega. These were primarily pups taken for food as they migrated south through Aleutian passes from the end of October to the end of November. Petroff wrote that men at Makushin had "an opportunity better than that enjoyed by any other settlement in their country to capture the young fur-seals in their passage through the straits of Oomnak in the fall, securing between 1,000 and 1,300 of these animals every year."⁴⁴ He stated that Biorka hunters took as many as 1,400 seals in one season in Unalga Pass. "The northerly winds bring them in the direction of this harbor, and the natives go out in their bidarkas and spear and shoot them for food," testified two Unalaska Aleuts in 1892. "Sometimes we find old male seals with them, but we dare not attack them in the bidarka."⁴⁵ Ruff Burdukofski, for many years the chief salaried by the AC Company at Unalaska, noted that the best time to get pups was "immediately after northerly gales, and before the water has grown so quiet that the young pups

41 C. A. Williams, *Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration*, Vol. III, 543-544.

42 See Jones' discussion of this in *A Century of Servitude*, 20.

43 Hugh H. McIntyre to Emma L. McIntyre, Unalaska, May 12, 1876. Robert Collins Collection.

44 Petrof, *Population and Resources*, 19.

45 Deposition of S. Melavidoff and D. Salamatoff, *Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration*, Vol. III, 209.

can again continue their journey.”⁴⁶ He stated that Unalaska village caught from 150 to 200 pups a year, depending on the weather. Meat from fur seal pups was comparable to chicken.⁴⁷ Arthur Newman recalled its use while he was the company agent at Chernofski and Nikolski.

The native hunters living at the settlements of Chernofsky and Umnak [Nikolski] used to hunt the fur-seals in the fall of each year for food, laying the flesh away for winter use. While at Chernofsky, I collected annually from the natives about 750 skins of fur-seals killed in the water adjacent, and at Umnak, I collected on an average about 150 skins. These were mostly the skins of gray pups taken during the month of October, they being most highly prized by the natives as an article of food.⁴⁸

These pelts fell outside the number the AC Company was authorized to take in the Pribilofs, and they could be shipped only with permission from the deputy Collector of Customs. In 1885 the company shipped 1,392 skins and 2,821 in 1886. In 1887 they received permission to ship 4,686.⁴⁹ As the numbers of sea otters declined and villagers returned to subsistence practices, fur seals became an increasingly important source of food. In 1887, however, word was received that “there seems to be a law prohibiting such killing” and Neumann asked his agents to collect “as few as possible” fur seal skins.⁵⁰ “I know they have to kill some to live,” he wrote to Reinken, “but I want you to buy as few skins as possible, and have therefore shipped you also less salt.”⁵¹ In 1889, perhaps to make up for a decrease in locally taken seals, the Unalaska agent asked his counterpart on St. Paul to “kindly send... about 250 or 300 Seal carcasses for the natives of these Islands.”⁵²



St. Paul Island showing village and “Killing Grounds.” H. W. Elliott. NOAA.

46 Deposition of Ruth [sic] Burdukofski, Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration, Vol. III, 206.
 47 Deposition of Kerrick Artomanoff, Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration, Vol. III, 211.
 48 Deposition of Arthur Newman, Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration, Vol. III, 101.
 49 June 12, 1885; June 26, 1886; July 7, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889. See also a table prepared by Max Heilbronner, secretary of the A. C. Company, Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration, Vol. IX, 570.
 50 September 13, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.
 51 September 13, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.
 52 July 31, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

When Richard Emmons, deputy U.S. collector of customs at Unalaska, sought permission in June 1890 for Unanga to kill fur seal pups for food and clothing, the Secretary of the Treasury had no choice, under the regulations, but to deny his request.⁵³



Native barabara and boy, St. Paul Island, Alaska. (*Alaska Investigations-1914*). Department of the Interior. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Alaska Regional Office, National Archives and Records Administration.

The Sea Otter Hunt

Like other men from Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega, Lazar Gordieff's life was inexorably bound to the success of seasonal sea otter hunts among the Shumagin Islands and other enclaves off the Alaska Peninsula. Expeditions were organized by the AC Company so as to never leave the otter banks without hunters. A summer party generally left in April and returned in September. A winter party, frequently transported on the vessel that picked up the summer hunters, remained until the spring. Gordieff appears to have usually joined the summer party.

Hunters from Makushin, Kashega, and Chernofski first traveled to Unalaska aboard a company vessel where they joined a larger contingent that included men from Biorka and Unalaska itself.

Kashega men frequently traveled by kayak to Chernofski where they met the company ship. Their kayaks were, of course, taken on board as these were used during the hunt. Biorka hunters arrived at Unalaska on their own after the local agent had been notified that a vessel was preparing to take the hunting party east. Notification was occasionally given by a signal fire lit on the Unalaska Island side of Beaver Inlet.⁵⁴ On June 7, 1878, eleven kayaks arrived at Unalaska from Biorka with eighteen men to join the hunting party destined for Sanak. In 1887 William Petersen, captain of the *Mathew Turner*, was told to take twenty-one kayaks from Unalaska and seven from Biorka "all laying in this port now" and proceed to Sanak.⁵⁵ The schooner transporting men to Sanak sometimes stopped at Biorka, saving the men the trip to Unalaska. This was done on May 12, 1879, when the Schooner *Bella* arrived to "take on board . . . 19 Baidarkas 32 men." On that occasion, however, there was room for only ten kayaks. Nine had to travel to Unalaska on their own and wait for the *Bella* to make a second trip.⁵⁶

Hunters from the three villages did not always travel or hunt together. In April 1888 Biorka hunters sailed on the Schooner *Pearl* in April while men from Kashega and Makushin came a little later on the *Dora*.⁵⁷ In May 1889 hunters from Makushin, Kashega, and Chernofski went on the *Dora* to hunt at Seal Cape, while men from Unalaska and Nikolski hunted at Sanak.⁵⁸ While each village had its own chief, these men were not necessarily in charge on the otter

53 San Francisco Call, Vol. 68, No. 56, 26 July 1890.

54 April 17, 1888, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

55 April 23, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

56 May 13, 1879, ACC Log Book 1878-1879.

57 April 15, 1888, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

58 May 4, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

grounds. As he aged, Chief Ruff Bourdokovsky accompanied hunters less often. The operation of the hunt appears to have been a cooperative venture between the AC Company agent on location or the captain of the vessel from which men hunted and a chief recognized by the company who could communicate with the hunters. Thus in 1888 Neumann admonished William Peterson, captain of the *Turner*, whose men had left him “in disgust,” to consult with Vasilii Shaiashnikov, chief of Unalaska, in order to “do something to retrieve yourself.”⁵⁹ Shaiashnikov’s position at the time was salaried by the AC Company. In a journal that I ascribe to him, covering the years 1886-1888, there is an entry that suggests his “assistants”—that is, sub-chiefs—from Makushin, Chernofski, Kashega, and Biorka, were also paid for their services.⁶⁰ Unfortunately, the journal provides no names.

Wives and daughters occasionally accompanied their husbands and fathers to the sea otter grounds. This was how Hugh McGlashan of Akutan met his future wife, Feckla Prokopeuff of Attu, who was assisting her father at the hunting camp on Sanak.⁶¹ It is possible, of course, that this was how Lazar Gordieff met his wife, also from Attu. In 1888, however, Neumann wrote to Reinken, “If any winter-party comes for Sanak do not send their wives.” He went into more detail in a letter to Henry Dirks at Atka, “Keep the women belonging to the men that go on the winter-party at home, from all I hear it is preferable to let a man remain at home rather than carry him with his wife to Sanak, where she only proves a hindrance to hunting.”⁶²



“Aleuts sea-otter hunting south of Saanak Island; the bidarkies waiting for the otter to rise again.”
H. W. Elliott, NOAA.

59 July 20, 1888, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

60 Shaiashnikoff 1886-1888 Ledger, p. 6.

61 Undated article, “Alaska ‘King’ here longs to be back with his queen” by Fred L. Boalt, n.d., 1912, from a Seattle newspaper. Copy from Kris McGlashan of Sand Point. This was a syndicated article that appeared under different titles in the fall of 1912.

62 September 14, 1888, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

Once on the otter grounds, hunters used a variety of techniques. Hunting from kayaks most frequently employed a strategy called the surround. Once sighted, an otter was encircled by a ring of hunters who kept up a barrage of spears, driving the otter to stay under water until, forced to the surface for a long gulp of air, it was struck.

On April 21, 1879, the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury restricted the killing of fur-bearing animals to Alaska Natives. Firearms were forbidden from May through September. No vessels, except those transporting otter hunters, could anchor in the “well-known otter killing grounds.” Then he added a final sentence that had wide repercussions: “White men lawfully married to natives, and residing within the territory, are considered natives within the meaning of this Order.”⁶³ This sentence according to Captain Michael A. Healy, following a cruise in 1884 on the U. S. Revenue Steamer *Corwin*, was “but offering a premium for bigamy and desertion.”

Unprincipled white hunters, tempted by the great value of otter skins, come here and marry the simple girls, force them to accompany them on their hunting trips and do their cooking and work for them, bring two or three children into the world, and then leave their families to get their living as best they can, while they themselves return to enjoy their earnings with other wives in civilization.⁶⁴

In 1881 John Muir noted that fifteen white men at Unga had married Native women in order to hunt sea otter.⁶⁵ These men brought breech loading rifles under a permit which allowed their importation for self-defense against hostile Indians. Of course, there were no hostile Indians in the region. Occasionally in southeastern Alaska outbreaks of violence between whites and Natives occurred, and in the western parts of the continental United States the Indian campaigns were still being pursued, a fact noted in an article from a newspaper glued for insulation to an interior wall of an Unanga home at Unalaska and discovered about a century later when the house was razed.⁶⁶

“No where in the Aleutian Islands,” wrote Healy in 1881, “is a breech loader necessary as an arm of defense. The natives are mild and peaceful in disposition, and if a permit be granted under any such plea, it should be to the native, not the white man.”⁶⁷ As everyone realized, rifles were not imported for defense but for hunting. They were brought in on permits and then given or sold to residents. Healy wrote, “Those to whom permits for breech loaders have been granted are given a big advantage in hunting over the natives—moreover from four to six of these guns are at times collected together by one person, and given out to natives

63 Quoted in Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration, Vol. VI, 127.

64 Healy, Report of the Cruise of the Revenue Marine Steamer *Corwin*, 19-20.

65 Muir, *The Cruise of the Corwin*, 23.

66 Unalaska City School Collection.

67 Healy, Report of M. A. Healy, 1st Lieut. Commanding Revenue Steamer *Rush*. Sept. 12, 1881. NARA, Alaska File of the Revenue Cutter Service, RG 26, M641.

to hunt with.” On March 30, 1882, rifles and ammunition were prohibited except for persons about to leave the territory and then only to certified residents of the mainland United States. Like any prohibition, this law jacked up the prices throughout the territory. Rifles continued to be used by both whites and Natives, as was seen when Lazar Gordieff died and Neumann claimed his rifle.



Captain Healy on the quarterdeck of the Revenue Cutter *Bear*, circa 1895. Healy is the first man of African-American descent to captain a vessel of the United States Navy, United States Coast Guard, U.S. Department of Homeland Security.

On April 19, 1886, the Reverend Nicholas Rysev drafted a petition on behalf of the Natives of Unalaska and surrounding areas. It was signed by 140 sea otter hunters. A comparison of the names with census lists from 1878 and 1897 shows that they came from five villages in addition to Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin: Akun, Akutan, Unalaska, Chernofski, and Nikolski. The date of the petition suggests it was drafted at a time when men gathered at Unalaska, returning from the 1885-1886 winter hunt and preparing to leave for the summer 1886 hunt. Addressed to President Cleveland, it was forwarded by A. C. Barry, Deputy Collector of Customs at Unalaska, who wrote “that the petitioners are not Indians but Christians and are peaceable and good citizens, and that in my opinion their prayer deserves a favorable consideration.”

Of the 140 hunters who signed the petition, 99 appear in the 1886-1887 winter hunting party ledger.⁶⁸ They included sixteen from Biorka, seven from Makushin, and fifteen from a combined Chernofski and Kashega. Among them were Lazar Gordieff of Chernofski, Arsim Galaktionoff of Makushin, and Terentii Makarin of Biorka.

68 Rev. Nikolai S. Risev also signed. I am including among the hunters three names of men who may not have participated in the hunt: Andrei Lodosknikoff, the assistant priest, Innokentii Sheshkin, another church official, and Alexander Shaiashnikov, who frequently worked as an agent for the A.C. Company. None of these three were listed in the winter hunting party.

This petition reviewed contemporary practices that may or may not have been in compliance with the statutes. As the petitioners understood the law, “the importation of fire-arms and ammunition is...granted to white hunters who marry native women also to immigrants, actual settlers, and residents,” but denied to Unangaġ. The competition from these white hunters forced them to abandon the spear and to begin using “muzzle-loading fire-arms.” The foreign hunters erected dwellings on the islands within “the hauling grounds and resting places” of the otter, gradually driving them away. Unangaġ emphasized the importance of the otter to their lives: “We gain our daily bread by the chase. Our principal occupation is sea-otter hunting.” Otters were being driven to even more “unapproachable places” making the hunt increasingly difficult and dangerous.

We beg respectfully that the permission granted to other hunters to import breech-loading rifles, but with-held from us, be also extended to us, and thus enable us to gain our subsistence by our own exertion.

Also that nobody should be permitted to build and inhabit any dwellings on the hauling and resting places of the sea otter, and section 1956 Revised Statues prohibiting the killing of fur-bearing animals without the consent of the Secretary of the Treasury be strictly enforced, as well as the penalties against violating this law, by vessels.⁶⁹

In his reply addressed to Governor Swineford of Alaska, the Secretary of the Treasury wrote that “no good reason is perceived for granting the petition until all reasonable means for the suppression of illegal hunting shall have been exhausted.”⁷⁰ Although Swineford was no friend of the AC Company, he also opposed the petition. He went to lengths to explain his reasons, even suggesting that white men married to Native women could hunt only with spears.

...it is wholly illegal for white men not married to native women to kill the sea-otter in *any manner*, and that white men who are married to native women have the same rights as the natives, no more, no less.... As I understand it, were it in my power to grant the permission asked for, I would only be making a bad matter worse by hastening the complete extinction of the sea-otter, should I comply with the request of the petitioners.... The spear is the only mode of killing the sea-otter recognized by law....⁷¹

But words had little effect. Rudolph Neumann is said to have dismissed and ridiculed Swineford’s letter. The Unalaska deputy U.S. commissioner promptly gave or sold a rifle to Ivan Dyakanoff while Neumann traded a Winchester rifle to Ivan Locomekoff for the first two sea otters he would kill with it.

69 1886 petition of natives to President Cleveland. ACC Records, Archives of the Arctic and Polar Regions Collections of the Elmer E. Rasmuson Library.

70 Charles S. Fairchild, Acting Secretary of the Treasury Department to Collector of Customs at Sitka, July 19, 1886. On this copy of the letter is the handwritten note, “Rec’d from Bureau of Customs, Feb. 11, 1928.” NARA, RG 22.

71 1886 petition of natives to President Cleveland.

Another petition was sent to the President of the United States the following year from hunters at Sanak, Unga, Belkovski, Unalaska, Akutan, Atka, and Attu. This requested a government vessel be stationed near the sea otter grounds to warn off pelagic hunting crews from American and British schooners. “It is stated that twenty schooners are now within a short distance of the Sanach and Choumagan hunting grounds,” reported the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “and the natives in their canoes have no chance to catch any otters. Being deprived of their legitimate pursuit, they are unable to obtain provisions in exchange for their furs.”⁷² By this time schooners were specifically outfitted with steam launches that were able to scour “every nook and cranny on the coast and otter-hunting grounds”⁷³ Chase Littlejohn had used a steam launch as early as 1886, and that year the AC Company offered to make them available for between two and three thousand dollars.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the use of nets proved ineffectual.⁷⁵ In 1887 three vessels (the *Otter*, *Alexander*, and *Rose Sparks*) took 1800 seals and 228 sea otters. The 1890 census decried the use of “well-fitted schooners... provided with steam launches and all the latest inventions for the destruction of marine animal life. The puffing and churning of the miniature steam craft can now be heard on the waters of all the most valuable hunting grounds, sounding the death knell of the highly prized mammals....”⁷⁶ In addition to schooners, whalers carried men who were crack shots, and these ships did a supplementary business taking otters and fur seals. The establishment of cod fishing stations around Sanak further disrupted the otter grounds.



Alfred Peter Swineford,
Governor of the District
of Alaska, 1885-1889.
[wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org)

As they had for almost two decades, hunters from Biorka, Makushin and Kashega continued to be transported to the islands off the Alaska Peninsula with their companions from other villages. The winter 1886-1887 hunt included eighteen men from Biorka, ten from Makushin, and seventeen from Chernofski and Kashega. Among them was Nikifor Aleksiev Denisoff of Kashega. He was twenty-three and he alone of all the active sea otter hunters of the 19th century would live long enough to become part of the World War II evacuation.

In 1888 there were 135 two-man baidarkas sent to the otter grounds including five from Makushin, six from Kashega, and fourteen from Chernofski. Biorka, for some unknown reason, does not appear on this list.⁷⁷ Approximately 2,496 otter were taken that year across the region.

72 San Francisco Chronicle, July 19, 1887:8

73 Report of Joseph Murray, Special Treasury Agent, for the Year 1895, in Seal and Salmon Fisheries, serial 3577, 442-443.

74 June 10, 1886, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

75 April 17, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

76 Government Printing Office (GPO), Report on Population and Resources of Alaska at the Eleventh Census, 204.

77 Ensign Willett to Lt. Commander Stockton, “Report on the Aleutian islands.” National Anthropological Archives, MS 3547. Undated, but it appears to have been written after September 1, 1888. The other villages were Unalaska, 25 kayaks; Chernofski, 14; Nikolski (Umnak), 15; Atka, 16; Attu, 12; Nikolaievsky, 8; Belkofski, 16; Unga, 16; and Vosnessenski, 4.

Back Home

When men returned home from the otter grounds, the first thing the local agent did (or should have done had he followed standing instructions) was to review each man's catch against his indebtedness to the company. When the Makushin, Kashega and Chernofski men returned in August 1889, Reinken was given detailed instructions.

Enclosed you receive the transfers of the hunters that have returned from Seal Cape, you will have to be careful about increasing their debts as a rule do not let them draw more than their cash amounts to, if possible see that their accounts are reduced, and only in extreme cases, where there is actual poverty or want let them overdraw.⁷⁸

This was the letter that told Lazar Gordieff's wife to stay where she was. Neumann also reduced the cost of wood that now sold at two pieces for 25 cents. The local agent was in periodic communication with Neumann or his substitute at Unalaska regarding individual debts and requests. "I enclose bill for pants delivered to Ivan Burenin 1st, and also watch for Ilia Kudrin sent per Makoushin natives in October," wrote Arthur Best to Reinken. "Afanasia Denisof wished for a pair of cheap pants," he continued, "I have not given them to him not knowing what he has drawn, should his account warrant it you can let him have them. Feodor Kolishulin goes to Kashega to live, he has no account."⁷⁹

The fall and winter months were spent hunting the occasional stray sea otter or migrating fur seals, and trapping red, cross, and other fox. Occasionally the general agent at Unalaska sent someone to collect furs, as on December 4, 1878: "Sent to Makooshine 2 3-hold Bardakas with 5 men—for fur Seals—with some provision and 300 pounds Salt." This party returned on December 9 with the fur seal skins.

All three villages supported both their local chapels and the Church of the Holy Ascension at Unalaska. A May 23, 1878, entry in the AC Company log noted that 3½ sea otters had been received from Biorka for the Unalaska church and half an otter for the Biorka chapel. The three and a half pelts were valued at \$69 while the half sea otter brought \$15. In October a small sea otter valued at \$8 was donated to the Biorka church account. A \$6 sea otter went to the Kashega church account on August 3 while a \$10 pelt was credited to the Chernofski church on the same day. Iliuliuk was the recipient of the largest donations, receiving \$55 in pelt credit in July and \$54 in November.⁸⁰ In 1887 Nikolai Kichikov and Terrentii Makarin each donated a sea otter to the fund for construction of a new church at Unalaska.⁸¹ Residents of the three villages came to Unalaska for special church services when the priest was unable to visit them. This was particularly true for

78 August 7, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

79 December 6, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

80 Library of Congress, Russian Church Collection, receipts dated May 23, July 22, August 3, October 12, and November 6, 1878.

81 Shaiashnikoff Unalaska Ledger 1886 to 1888.

marriages. The 1886-1888 Shaiashnikov ledger records a marriage at Unalaska on September 25, 1888 between Artemin Yatchmenev and Feodosia Khramov who traveled from Kashega for the ceremony. A marriage was recorded on September 26, 1888, between the widower Terentii Makarin of Biorka and the widow Marfa Lukanin from Makushin.

Village agents lived in their villages, unlike the general agent who lived in company housing at Unalaska but often owned a home in San Francisco or elsewhere. The village agents often had marital or familial ties to the local population. Any hardships they created stemmed more from neglect than from overt acts against residents. However, the commercial ruthlessness that characterized the AC Company in its dealings with competitors not infrequently devolved onto its general agents. Dall was told that “Hennig the A.C. Co.’s agent went out by night and poured acid in the skin boats belonging to natives suspected of free trading and then refused to sell them any new skins, so they could not go out after otter.”⁸² Whether this accusation was true or not, it suggests an absence of accountability on the part of general agents. Greenbaum, the general agent before Neumann, was noted for his temper and men who stepped in as acting general agents followed his example. When the chief of Makushin arrived at Iliuliuk on March 15, 1879, with seven red and one cross fox pelts, he found that the Western Fur and Trading Company offered him more than the AC Company. As a result, he “had his arm (ulnar bone) broken, and otherwise inhumanly beaten, on the 17th of March 1879,” wrote Lucien M. Turner. Only one of the skins belonged to the chief, he explained, “the other skins he sold belonged to other natives who commissioned him to sell them for them.... The beating was done by the man left in charge as agent while Greenbaum went to San Francisco.”⁸³

Illness was a constant worry and epidemics were frequent. In the spring of 1881 Biorka was struck by an outbreak of “typhoid pneumonia” that attacked “all classes, but is more fatal with the aged. They are taken with fever, and pains in the chest and lungs, and die in from two to three days in great agony.”⁸⁴ When Captain Hooper visited in May four had died and 18 remained in serious condition. The appearance of such a devastating illness was particularly severe in a village like Biorka, small, isolated, without a physician. (At Unalaska 13 had died and 35 were still sick. The AC Company physician was ill and unable to assist, but Surgeon Rosse of the Revenue Cutter Service had stepped in.⁸⁵)

82 Dall to Mrs. R. L. Nichols, November 2, 1921. SIA. RU 7073, box 5.

83 Turner, Lucien M. *An Aleutian Ethnography*. University of Alaska Press, Fairbanks. 2008:16.

84 Hooper. Letter dated Unalaska, May 20, 1881. Alaska File of the Revenue Cutter Service, 1867-1914. RG 36 M641.

85 Hooper identified the A.C. Co. physician as a Dr. Holman. However, William S. Hereford was the company's doctor during this period. He was stationed at St. George from 1880 to 1881, and then at Unalaska from 1881 to 1882 (during which time he traveled to Attu, Atka, Belkovski, Unga, etc.) From 1882 to 1891 he was back in the Pribilof Islands. *Proceedings of the Tribunal of Arbitration*, Vol. III, 32

Six years later, in 1887, another epidemic struck villages in the Alaska Peninsula area. On July 12, Neumann wrote to his agent, William Brown, at Morshovoi, "I hear a great many natives have died at your place, please send the names and what they owed."

On the same day he wrote to O.W. Carlson at Belkofski that he was sorry to have heard about the deaths, including that of Revd. Salamatoff. "Send list of names and transfer their debts except Salamatoff," Neumann instructed Carlson. He asked the Wosnesenski agent (Otto Berlin) to inform him of any deaths.⁸⁶ In a letter to Dirks at Atka, however, Neumann suggested that the deaths created the possibility that hunters from the Chain itself might have a more successful season.⁸⁷

Whether it was the same illness or a different one, the Unalaska parish was devastated by the deaths of 73 individuals during the first five months of 1888. On October 13 Nikolai Rysev wrote to his superiors that during a visit to all the villages under his jurisdiction between late April and late September either by kayak or on a ship of the AC Company, he learned that 43 males and 28 females had died. From his description of "coughing with piercing pain and other illnesses" the illness may have been pertussis or whooping cough leading to pneumonia and other serious conditions.⁸⁸

Drowning inevitably stalked men who made their livelihood on the sea. Returning home from Unalaska in September 1877, two Kashega men drowned when a storm capsized their two-hatch kayak. They escaped from the kayak, but were unable to hang on to the one-man kayak that had accompanied them.⁸⁹ The 1886-1888 ledger noted that five men "perished" on Sanak in 1888. Two men from Biorka (Kornilii Izmailov and Petr Sapozhnikov) are recorded to have drowned, in either 1887 or 1888. They may have been among four men from this village who perished in a storm while returning from Sanak in their baidarkas. Alexei Yatchemenov's account of this does not provide names, but it states that two baidarkas, four men, from Biorka were lost.⁹⁰

Violent death was rare. At the time of the Alaska purchase, murder had reportedly been absent for over fifty years.⁹¹ Two murders in the last quarter of the 19th century reflect a change in society. In March 1889 the brutal killing of Philip Dvernikov was investigated during an inquest held by the AC Company doctor and the jury

86 July 12, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

87 September 9, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

88 Library of Congress, Russian Church Collection. Nikolai Rysev to the Alaska Spiritual Office, 1/13 October 1888. Translation courtesy of Zoya Johnson who made the connection to whooping cough.

89 September 5, 1877. Logbook Tshernoffsky Station 1877-1878. In J. Penelope Goforth, "Description of Logbooks." Bringing Aleutian History Home: the Lost Ledgers of the Alaska Commercial Company, 1875-1895.

90 Bergsland and Dirks, Aleut Tales and Narratives, 313. An account from Andrew Makarin, conveyed by Nick Galaktionoff (Hudson, ed., Cuttlefish Two, 58) states that Andrew's father was among those who drowned but this is not correct as Terentii Makarin lived much longer.

91 Comment credited to Innokentii Shaiashnikov. Anonymous, "Scientific Expedition to Alaska," 475.

found a verdict against unnamed whalers. Dvernikov was a retired sea otter hunter who had signed the 1886 petition and whom Neumann described as “a poor old inoffensive native.”⁹² A second example directly involved a resident of Makushin and is illustrative of how Unalaska (Iliuliuk) dominated life in the eastern Aleutians.

Ioann Ladigan was a volatile individual, who may have moved to Unalaska from Atka. After his wife died in mysterious circumstances, he was “exiled” to Makushin where he arrived with his teenage son and daughter. In March 1878 he and his son accompanied Alexander Sherebarnikov, an older man from Unalaska, on a trek across the portage from Makushin Bay to Captains Bay. Sherebarnikov’s strangled body was found along the trail. Suspicion fell on Ladigan, and in the absence of any law enforcement personnel, a public meeting was held, presided over by the AC Company agent, Alfred Greenbaum. At the end of the meeting, Greenbaum wrote, “nothing definite could be ascertained.”⁹³ Ten days later, on April 12, the agent received a petition asking for Ladigan’s banishment “to some island which you may select, we only ask that he may be taken to the North.” The petition had a cautionary tone. “We do not wish him to be punished in any way,” it concluded, “but only ask that he shall leave Ounalashka and stay away.” Ladigan consented and signed the document.⁹⁴ He and his children may have been sent to Sanak. An Anton Ladigan was listed among hunters registered at Sanak for the 1886-1887 winter hunting party.⁹⁵ In 1888 Rudolph Neumann wrote to Captain Wm. Peterson, of the *Schr. Turner*, not to allow Anton Ladigan on board (July 20, 1888). In 1897 he was listed as a resident of Belkofski.⁹⁶

Whatever the cause of death, when a man died the AC Company transferred his debt to his children. Implementation of this policy was not uniform. When a Denisoff died in 1885, his debt of \$212.25 was divided equally between his two sons, Constantine and Nekifor—with an extra 25 cents going to the company. When Bonifati Yatchmenoff died, Reinken was told to keep his debt in his own name and to not transfer it to his sons. Jacob Chercasin died owing the company for a shotgun, and the company wanted to know to whom it had been given in order to charge it to that individual’s account. When Nikolai Kozlof died at Biorka, the local agent was instructed to “take both gun & bydarka as the former has not been yet paid for.”⁹⁷ And, as noted earlier, when Lazar Gordieff died at Sanak, his rifle was kept by the general agent.

92 April 17, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889. This death was also recorded in the 1886-1888 Shaiashnikov ledger, page 13.

93 April 2, 1878. ACC Unalaska Station Log Book 1878-1879.

94 “Translation of Petition of Inhabitants of Ounalaska for the Removal of Ivan Ladingin, an Objectional Character,” The Bancroft Library. This may have been among the materials collected by Ivan Petrof and is therefore in need of verification from other sources.

95 Information supplied by J. Penelope Goforth from a transcription of Book II, Accounts, Individuals: Winter Hunting Party 1886-1887. Bringing Aleutian History Home: the Lost Ledgers of the Alaska Commercial Company, 1875-1895.

96 Hooper, *Sea-Otter Banks of Alaska*, 18. He is listed as being born at Atka.

97 June 16, 1885, January 28, 1886, June 23, 1887, January 1888, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

We do not have the name of the Makushin chief who was beaten in 1879. Gregory Petukoff's descendents continued living at Makushin, including his son Gregory, his grandson and numerous granddaughters. Joseph Petelin still lived in the village with his wife, son and daughters. Beginning around 1880, Thomas Petelin became the Makushin agent. The widespread Krukoff family had a presence here as did the Kostromitin family. Peter Kostromitin had the distinction of being the eldest resident of all three villages. He had been born in 1798, a year before the Russian-American Company received its first charter. When Ivan Petroff visited the village he interviewed Kostromitin but found it "next to impossible to arouse his slumbering faculties of recollection."⁹⁸ Nevertheless, when Petroff set about writing the various reports related to the 1880 census, he used the elder's accounts to document the growth of Bogoslof Island. The elderly Unangaꝯ was jettisoned from the final report even though Petroff had produced a set of recollections of astonishing detail.⁹⁹ All fake, of course. The 1886-1889 Shaiashnikov ledger records the death of a Petr Kostromitin in 1888. Another man with the same name is listed as dying in 1881 in the Russian Church Records.

Front, seated: Ivan Olgin. Back row, left to right: Serapion Petelin, unidentified man, and Aleksandr Shaiashnikov. ASL-P243-1-114, Michael Z. Vinokourov Photograph Collection.



⁹⁸ The Alaska Appeal, April 22, 1879.

⁹⁹ Petroff, Early Times on the Aleutian Islands; Life of Peter Kostromitin, 1798-1878. 1878. Bancroft Library, Hubert Howe Bancroft Collection, BANC MSS P-K 14.

In 1878 Abraham Yatchmenev, who had resided at Kashega and been instrumental in the establishment of the local chapel, was now seventy-two years old and living at Iliuliuk with his wife and twenty-four year-old daughter (perhaps Christina). His son Miron was also there with his wife, two daughters and three sons, including the future chief Alexei. Abraham's daughter Matrona married into a Kashega family, that of John S. Borenin, and her descendents would play a significant role in the last years of Kashega. In 1878 Bonifati Yatchmenev, about thirty years younger, was also living at Kashega with his large family, including his three-year old son Ioanne who would eventually serve as village chief. Iakov Kudrin, another former RA Company employee, remained in Kashega with his wife Marianne, his nineteen year-old daughter Elena, and his son, Nicholas, twenty-three. There were two other adult Kudrin men with families in the village. Ioanne Kudrin's descendents would include Cornelius Kudrin, one of the last two residents of Kashega, and Michael Kudrin, the father of a large family with ties to an important family at Makushin and Unalaska, that of Nicholai and Pauline Lekanoff. The wife of one of Ioanne's grandsons, Efemia Krukoff, would be the oldest World War II evacuee from Kashega. Kashega was the only village without a permanent AC Company agent because of its proximity to Chernofski where the German immigrant Adolph Reinken was stationed for many years. Following the death in 1878 of his first wife, Reinken married Alexandra Kudrin of Kashega in 1881.

Terentii Makarin continued to reside at Biorka in 1878. The leader of the community, however, was Gregory Krukoff. Although Krukoff's son Lazar was 20, the Krukoff family would disappear from the community by the end of the century. John Olgin became the agent after Gregory Krukoff died. He appears to have been a good manager, never raising the blood pressure of the general agent. His father, Alexander, had been a creole who since 1828 had worked for the RA Company aboard ships and as a clerk at Sitka and Kodiak.¹⁰⁰ Although he had closest ties to the Kodiak region, John Olgin spent years in the Aleutians.¹⁰¹ He eventually retired to Unalaska where he had a home.

When village sea otter hunters left for extended periods, the local agent sometimes went to Iliuliuk. In April 1887 Olgin was told that after putting his hunters aboard the Schr. *Pearl* he should close up shop and return to Iliuliuk, leaving someone at Biorka "to look out for the women and children which remain there."¹⁰² That same spring, Petelin at Makushin was told that he would have to remain in the village to "get your goods ready for taking stock" but that his wife and belongings could travel to Iliuliuk with the hunters. He later joined the agent at Sanak to assist him.¹⁰³ In 1889 Neumann gave more detailed instructions to A.M. Larsen, his agent at Akutan. "You can issue some provisions, say for 3 months to each family," he wrote, "then take out of your store anything

100 Grinev, Kto Est Kto, 393.

101 The 1900 U.S. census has him living at Unalaska, age 46 (born May 1854), with his wife Natalia and daughter Acolina.

102 April 19, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

103 April 19, May 20, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

you deem the people might want and leave it with some trustworthy native. You will ship all furs on hand, bringing your inventory with you, you will come to this station.”¹⁰⁴

Encroaching Poverty

By the end of the 1870s the economic tide was clearly receding. Hunters still took enough sea otters and fur seals to maintain a relative if precarious prosperity, and Unangaġ in the eastern Aleutians were doing better than hunters in the Kodiak region. The store in Kodiak sent goods to Unalaska that could not be sold there even though Kodiak hunters were generally paid more for otter skins than Unangaġ.¹⁰⁵ In 1877 the Kodiak AC Company station paid an average of \$35 for a sea otter skin.¹⁰⁶ In 1879 the Unalaska station paid an average of only \$22 per skin.¹⁰⁷ Growing poverty was reflected in an 1878 notice the Unalaska store posted in Russian requesting that debts be settled at least once every twelve months. “Persons whose debt has increased larger than the Agent deems them responsible for,” read the announcement, “can only receive additional advance for hunting outfit.”¹⁰⁸ The church distributed both funds and food, as did the agent of the AC Company on occasion.¹⁰⁹

Again, specific information is lacking regarding conditions at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega. Petroff, following his 1878 visit, referred to the Makushin people as “mere auxiliaries of the inhabitants of Oonalashka village... [who] furnish a contingent every year for the regular sea-otter hunting party that leaves Iliuliuk for Sannakh.” Whereas once, he wrote, they had produced warriors of renown, they were now notorious for indolence.¹¹⁰ He was more impressed with appearances at Biorka. With uncharacteristic honesty, he left Kashega out of his report because he had not personally visited the community.

As the 1880s drew to a close, men from the three villages accumulated increasing debts. Neumann cautioned his village agents about overextending credit. “Say for instance, Artemon Yatchmenef owes \$684.65,” he wrote in 1887 to Reinken about one of the Kashega men. “His furs amount to \$242.00 [and] he took at Ounalaska \$30.00 so you can let him have \$100.00 to 120 more, you will of course act the same to all the natives that are in debt.”¹¹¹ Neumann periodically reiterated his instructions, but debt continued to mount. In 1884 Kashega owed

104 May 4, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

105 McIntyre to Greenbaum, April 27, 1878. Letters from Alaska Commercial Company Records, Kodiak. MF #135.

106 Letters from Alaska Commercial Company Records, Kodiak, MF #135, April 15, 1877.

107 \$429 for 22 otters on May 17; \$2340 for 104 otters on June 17. ACC Unalaska Station Log Book 1878-1879.

108 April 13, 1878. ACC Unalaska Station Log Book 1878-1879.

109 ACC Unalaska Station Log Book 1878-1879. April 11, 1879. Eliza Otis wrote about Shaiashnikov during her visit in 1880, “He is a good man, and spends all the money that he does not need for his own family to make his poor people comfortable.” E.A.O. [Eliza A. Otis]. “Our Boys and Girls, A Gossippy Sketch from the Far and Frozen North.” Los Angeles Times. November 30, 1884.

110 Petrof, Population and Resources, 19-20.

111 September 13, 1887, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

the company \$4,738.08. By August 1889 this had increased to \$6,363.49.¹¹² Figures for Makushin and Biorka are missing, but Chernovski's debt rose from \$2,927.70 to \$5,971.50.¹¹³ Given the steady and rapid decline in sea otters, this was a staggering amount, a bondage of extraordinary proportions from which escape proved impossible.

112 August 19, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.

113 August 19, 1889, ACC Copy Book 1885-1889.



Sea otter skull. Photograph by Francis Broderick.

Chapter 7 Loss of the Sea Otter



Economic considerations were paramount in contracting marriages. Marfa Lukanin was a widow when she married Terentii Makarin at Unalaska in September 1888 and moved to Biorka from Makushin. His wife, Olga Petrov, had died in May. Marfa needed support for herself and her daughter, Seraphenie, while Terentii needed a mother for his two young children, Matfie and Parasovia. Biorka was a more prosperous village than Makushin and Marfa soon settled into her new routine. Her and Terentii's son Andrew was born in August 1889, followed in 1891 by Ilia. In June 1892, as summer began to burst into activity, three-year-old Andrew was probably busy with the job given to all Unanga children: playing. Training would follow eventually, but early childhood was a time for exploration and delight. Andrew, ignoring the spring rain and escaping the watchful eye of his twelve-year-old stepsister, may have slipped outside their home as a strange vessel slowing glided to anchor near the village.

Harrison H. Thornton, his wife Neda, and their traveling companion Ellen Louise Kittredge, were aboard the whaler *Newport* on their way to Cape Prince of Wales where he was to teach school (and be shot to death a year later). Fog had surrounded the small vessel for several days. "The next afternoon the fog suddenly lifted a little," he wrote, "and we found ourselves in an unknown bay with an unknown hamlet, at the foot of unknown cliffs; none of the ship's officers, all of whom were more or less veteran Arctic whalers, seemed to know where we were." They had stumbled into Beaver Inlet and had anchored off Biorka Village.

As we drew near, sounding all the way, not a human being could be seen.... [M]oving still nearer, we could see Greek crosses standing at the head of each lonely grave on the cliff side, and a building surmounted by a Greek cross, probably a church, showing that the natives had belonged, at least nominally, to the Russian church; the almost mountainous cliffs covered with bright green grass, in spite of

the patches of persistent snow lingering here and there, were a grateful sight to our eyes, wearied of the continual sullen gray of that northern sea. At last a single dog was seen, prowling along the beach in search of stray dead fish, cast up by the sea; but no smoke issued from any of the chimneys to show that his master still lived; finally, after creeping along cautiously for ten or fifteen minutes more, we saw a woman come out of one of the houses.

Andrew may have alerted his sister or someone else who came outside to investigate. His own mother probably remained indoors. She was unwell and had only a few months to live. The strangers' brief intrusive exploration of the village was highlighted by a visit to the church.

In spite of the rain which was falling, the ladies were anxious to go ashore, and as we had not set foot on land for three weeks we ran all over the village, peeping in at doors and windows of unoccupied cabins, collecting strange flowers and shells, and trying to establish some sort of understanding with the few women and children we found; for all the men had gone away to hunt sea otter for the Alaska Commercial Company — the usual rough trading house with the sign "A.C. Co." standing there deserted for the time being. We found the old church very interesting, too, with its gorgeous altar cloths, its massive silver candlesticks, its bells manufactured in Russia and ornamented with fine bas relief work.

The name of this little settlement, as well as we could understand the natives, was Berka. After leaving it, a few hours' steaming brought us to Unalaska, the most beautiful little harbor I ever saw....¹

"The village contains 57 native Aleuts and a Russian Creole trader," wrote Samuel Applegate about Biorka for the 1890 census, "who live in neat and comfortable dwellings, though many of them are but sod huts." Applegate had lived in the Aleutians since 1881 and had hunted sea otters on the schooner *Everett Hays* since 1888. The trader was Ivan Olgin who eventually retired to Unalaska.²

Borka was...once a quite prosperous hunting community, which the gradual disappearance of sea otters has reduced to comparative poverty. The hunters still join the parties sent to the reefs of Sannak every season, but they bring but few skins back with them. Fortunately the natural food supply of these natives, derived chiefly from the ocean, is as abundant as ever.³

1 Thornton, "The Trip to Alaska," 392,394.

2 His house, with a few trees, was where the Town Park is now located. Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 28. Swanson recalled Olgin commenting on the large population that once distinguished Biorka. Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 64.

3 Applegate, "The Third District," 88.

In Applegate's description, Makushin and Kashega shared many conditions with Chernofski.

On the northeastern shore of Unalaska island a small native settlement exists at the mouth of the bay of Makushin, containing 51 Aleut natives, who maintain themselves by joining the sea-otter parties and by trapping during the winter. Their dwellings are sod huts, and they have a small log chapel, sadly in need of repairs. Mount Makushin, an extinct volcano, looms up to the northward of the little village, and to the eastward extends the vast bay for over 20 miles, its dark, rocky shore colored here and there with the green mounds of long deserted settlements.

A few miles to the southward of Makushin there is another small settlement of natives known as Kashigin, or Kashiga, and containing between 40 and 50 people, who depend entirely upon hunting and fishing for their subsistence. Fish are very abundant, and the hunters reap quite a harvest of fur-seal skins by hunting the animals at the time of their migration to and from the islands through the pass between Unalaska and Umnak islands.⁴

“The same may be said of the village of Chernovsky,” Applegate continued, “but the people of this settlement have the additional advantage of a resort for sea otters in their immediate vicinity among the reefs and kelp beds which fringe this desolate coast. At Chernovsky a trading store was maintained for many years, but it has now been abandoned. The dwellings are chiefly sod huts, but comfortably kept, and a neat little chapel was erected during the more prosperous times of the past.”

All three villages had replaced their barabara-style chapels with log or wood-frame buildings, although exact dates for the new constructions have not been discovered. It was probably when the new Makushin chapel was dedicated that its name was changed from the Chapel of St. Gregory to the Chapel of the Nativity of Christ. Men aboard the U.S. Fish Commission steamer *Albatross* who visited Makushin in 1889 noticed a dozen barabaras for the local residents and a “small frame church painted white.”⁵ In 1870 Veniaminov, then the Metropolitan of Moscow, sent an icon of the Transfiguration to Unalaska. Because the chapel at Kashega bore the name Transfiguration, it has been assumed the icon was for that chapel.⁶ A new generation of Unangaꝯ men had risen to leadership roles in

4 Applegate, “The Third District,” 89.

5 Tanner, Report... Steamer Albatross, 244-245.

6 The icon appears in an 1896 inventory of the Church of the Holy Ascension. On the back in Russian is “On the Island of Unalaska to the Church of the Transfiguration of our Lord, 1870 July 27 Moscow” [translation by Barbara Sweetland Smith] along with a stamp with the signature of Metropolitan Innokentii. Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1058-1059.



Chapel of the Epiphany of Our Lord at Chernofski. Photograph courtesy Ray Kranich.

their respective chapels and in the 1890s services were conducted and children baptized by Ivan I. Kudrin at Kashega and Ivan G. Kriukov at Makushin.⁷

The Chapel of the Epiphany of Our Lord at Chernofski, judging only from an exterior photograph taken in its decline, was the most remarkable of all the village chapels and testifies to the wealth sea otter hunting had brought to that community. The double doors leading into the narthex were bordered by plain, almost bas relief, columns, each topped with a graceful three-tiered capital. Above these, a high arch rose to its apex, enclosing an eight-part fan that stretched from side to side like a sunrise. The decorative elements continued near the peak with a small fleur-de-lis. Two brass bells hung from a support just outside the doors.

The Church of the Holy Ascension at Unalaska was in need of repairs and plans were made under Father Nicholas Rysev to completely rebuild the structure. Villages began to contribute furs, usually sea otter pelts, to a special construction fund. In 1891 residents of the three villages joined with people from Nikolski, Chernofski, Akutan, and Unalaska to ask the AC Company to hold this credit until “we agree and authorize the disposition” of the funds.⁸ A new cathedral would be consecrated in 1896.



Postcard view of the Church of the Holy Ascension, Unalaska by F.H. Nowell for the 1909 Alaska-Yukon-Pacific Exposition, Seattle. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

The virtual monopoly this company had enjoyed in the Chain for almost twenty years was ending. Perhaps sensing the upcoming controversies over a decline in seal populations and a rise in pelagic sealing by British and Japanese vessels, the company surrendered its once lucrative contract to the North American

7 Marti Murray, citing a translation of an 1896 Unalaska church book by Lydia T. Black. “Lost Villages: Mini-biographies of the last inhabitants of Attu, Biorka, Chernofski, Kashega, and Makushin.” Draft, 2 August 2005.

8 Letter to the Alaska Commercial Company, August 21, 1891. Library of Congress, Russian Church Collection, D-49.

Commercial Company in 1890 without much of a fight. To implement their new twenty-year contract, the NAC Company established headquarters in the deep-water port of Dutch Harbor, within Unalaska Bay. They constructed a dock and a complex of buildings that included warehouses, residences, a hotel and a store. Even though the AC Company now had neither the income from the Pribilof Islands to buttress sea otter hunting losses nor the supply of sea lion skins and fur seal carcasses necessary for distribution to its hunters, it continued to station traders in the villages, at least for a few more years.

Sea otters had virtually disappeared from the vicinity of most Aleutian villages by the time hunting regulations began to favor Native hunters. Indeed, the catch ascribed to hunters from villages throughout the Chain was primarily taken from islands around Kodiak. Even the once rich otter grounds near Sanak, Belkofski, and Morzhovoi were becoming depleted.⁹ The increased employment available to white men in mining and fishing along the Alaska Peninsula prodded the Treasury Department to gradually restrict otter hunting to Natives. After April 14, 1893, white men married to Native women were no longer able to hunt sea otters. The ban on the use of rifles, however, remained in effect. In the spring of 1892, the *Yorktown*, a steel-hulled navy gunboat, joined a trio of revenue cutters and two other navy vessels patrolling off the Alaska Peninsula and into the Bering Sea. Near the end of July, while at False Pass, it seized furs and rifles from ten Morzhovoi and six Belkofski hunters. "The loss of outfits and catch," wrote C.H. Townsend, "left the people of Belkofski and Morzhovoi completely destitute." He was a naturalist aboard the U.S. Fisheries steamer *Albatross* and he urged the government to make restitution for these losses. "The hunters of Makushin, Kashega and Chernofski whom I interviewed," he wrote, "were so frightened over the fate of the Belkofski and Morzhovoi hunters that they returned home without having taken any otters." Unable to repay the company for their outfits and advances, "they had little hope of assistance from that source for the coming winter." Townsend's memorandum urged that Native hunters be allowed to use rifles. "I am greatly interested in the preservation of the sea otter," he wrote, "but still more interested in the welfare of the native Aleuts who are dependent on its capture for a livelihood." He mentioned that for "the young men who have grown up accustomed to guns[,] the spear is merely an accessory." Rifles had become irreplaceable tools for subsistence.

The price of a single sea otter will enable a native to purchase clothing and other necessaries, while food, with the exception of fish, is procured to a considerable extent by means of the gun, with which he shoots seals, sea lions, porpoise, and all kinds of sea birds. Without his gun he cannot obtain skins of the sea lion from which his boat is always made. The boat (*bidarkie*) is absolutely essential to all movement in this Archipelago whether for hunting or fishing. From the sea lion is derived also the material for the waterproof garments always used by the Aleutian people. Six sea lion skins are required to properly construct a two hatch boat, and these must be renewed nearly every year.

9 Hooper, *Sea-Otter Banks of Alaska*, 7.

The shot gun is constantly used in taking sea birds, for with these people sea birds are not only used for food, but their skins are largely sewed into clothing. In brief, the Aleut is dependent for food and clothing on his boat, gun and fishing line. He lives by the sea; what he derives from the land is an unimportant feature in his subsistence.¹⁰

He feared a crisis if Aleuts were forced to return to hunting for essentially “vanished” game with “almost forgotten methods.”

The ban on Natives owning rifles was lifted on December 2, 1896. That year had been exceptionally lucky for the seventeen Makushin hunters. A visitor to Unalaska was shown “a box of sea-otter skins” which the AC Company had purchased from them for “some 12,000 dollars.”¹¹ Even so, sea otters were so depleted that the AC Company began removing its agents from small villages and closing its stores. “The low prices prevailing in the London market and the constant and rapid decrease of the sea-otters,” lamented Rudolph Neumann on September 20, 1897,

has made that branch of the trade unprofitable, and has forced us to abandon, in this district, the following stations: Woznesensky, Belkofsky, Morzhovoi, Sanak, Akutan, Biorka, Makushin, Kashega, Tschernofsky, and Umnak.

The natives of these ten settlements supported themselves entirely by hunting sea-otters, but, in consequence of the disappearance of these animals in the localities above mentioned, had to be transported in schooners during the last few years to the remaining sea-otter grounds in the vicinity of Kadiak Island, which now have, also, ceased to be profitable, and the people will eventually be forced to rely on Government aid for their subsistence.¹²

The agents at Atka and Akutan purchased the company stores, and Henry Dirks and Hugh McGlashan continued to make goods available to residents. The stores at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega were simply closed.

In September 1897 C. L. Hooper, commanding officer of the Bering Sea Patrol, detailed a devastating decline in sea otters with predictably profound results for communities. In several particulars, he repeated Townsend’s recommendations. He included a household census for fourteen villages. Compiled with the help of Father Alexander Kedrovsky at Unalaska, the report enumerated 1,165 residents in the Chain. In only a few villages were men identified specifically as hunters, but if all the men from sixteen to sixty were counted there were 331 who were

10 Townsend, C.H., memorandum, April 13, 1896. Submitted to the Secretary of the Treasury by the U. S. Commission of Fish and Fisheries. NARA, RG 22.

11 Gray, Maria Freeman. *The Alaskan and Herald Combined*. September 12, 1896.

12 Report of the Governor of Alaska to the Secretary of the Interior. Government Printing Office. Washington, D.C. 1897:38.

probably sea otter hunters. Townsend had counted 347 hunters in sixteen villages from Unga to Attu.

The 1898 hunt was thwarted by an embargo on hunting otters from vessels.

In his official report for that year, Governor John G. Brady recommended that otter hunting be entirely prohibited and ludicrously suggested Aleuts should work in fish canneries or cut wood “along the Yukon River.” In 1899 he wrote that no more than ten or fifteen dollars was received by each hunter for his season’s catch. In 1900 he reiterated that Aleuts should be “constrained to seek work in the canneries and in the mines and to cultivate gardens.” That year he emphasized how otter hunting kept those “who engage in it miserably poor and always in debt to the store which outfits them and conveys them to the hunting grounds.” This allegation was passionately disputed by Samuel Applegate whose sea otter hunting career had begun in 1892 when he had the *Everett Hays* built in California.¹³

The influenza and measles epidemic of 1900 followed the northern coast of Alaska and arrived at Unalaska in August where, according to Dr. Albert Newhall, “it was introduced by a boy from St. Michael.” This was true for the influenza, but the measles arrived later and probably came off a vessel from the south. In any event, the “Great Sickness,” as it came to be called, “struck with lightning force and within days whole villages were sick or dying.”¹⁴ As many as 2,000 people died in the Territory, with some villages losing between 25 and 50 percent of their residents. Newhall wrote that about one third of the Native population in the territory died. In late July 1900 Dutch Harbor, along with Nome, was quarantined under an order from the Marine Hospital Corps.¹⁵ The epidemic was compounded by tuberculosis and pneumonia and later outbreaks of whooping cough and small pox. The commanding officer of the *Rush* reported that measles “had assumed fatal form” at Unalaska and many Natives had died.¹⁶ According to a Sitka newspaper, by October there had been 17 deaths at Unalaska.¹⁷ The illness spread to Belkofski, Unga and other locations and by 10 November the newspaper reported 39 deaths at Unalaska and between 12 and 15 at Belkofski. A report from the Unalaska public school, written by Frances Mann, mentioned a fall and winter epidemic of measles “and its sequel” that “caused the death of about one third of the population.” A 1901 report made by F. J. Thornburg, assistant surgeon attached to a briefly manned hospital at Dutch Harbor, included information received from P.B. Kashevaroff. According to this priest, from a population that had stood at 353 the previous year, 116 had died

13 Gross, Nancy. “Samuel Applegate: Practical Dilettante” A paper presented to the Alaska Historical Society symposium, *Commerce in Alaska’s Past*, October 21, 1988:5. Applegate’s extensive correspondence documents the final years of sea otter hunting. In 1893 he initiated a long-term commitment to Nikolski Village that continued until hunting was banned in 1911.

14 Fortuine, *Chills and Fever*, 215-226

15 San Francisco Call, 29 July 1900.

16 W.H. Cushing to Secretary of the Treasury, September 8, 1900. NARA, MF 720 (Alaska File of the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, 1868-1903), Roll 8.

17 *The Alaskan and Herald Combine*, October 27, 1900.

during the past year. Among these there were 30 deaths ascribed to “cold,” 24 to tuberculosis, 33 to measles, 7 to old age, and 5 to drowning.¹⁸

The surgeon aboard the U.S. Steamer *Manning* reported that measles had been responsible for the deaths of 47 people at Atka during the winter of 1900-1901.¹⁹ If that is accurate, it meant approximately 37 percent of the village had died. The situation at Attu was unknown; however the following year he visited that village and found the health of the community of 60 had been and was very good. Nevertheless, Attu’s population only five years earlier had been 98. Mortality figures for the three villages are not known. At Biorka, Terentii Makarin’s third wife, Irina Kochutin, whom he had married in April 1896, died September 2, 1900, perhaps a victim of this epidemic. Their son Petr was three years old.

After the AC Company ended its direct involvement in sea otter hunting, men had to make their own way to the otter grounds if they were unable to work for one of the few private vessels still pursuing the otter. Travel was by skin boat. In 1900 storms forced men from Akutan to camp on Ugamak Island, the most eastern of the Krenitzin Islands, for three weeks before crossing the pass to Unimak and on to the otter grounds some 100 miles away. For men from more distant villages travel was always problematical, if not impossible.

In May 1901 Applegate collected four petitions signed by 105 hunters from Unalaska, Kashega, Chernofski, Makushin, Nikolski, and Akutan asking that they be allowed to hunt either from vessels or from shore. There were 36 signers from Unalaska, 16 from Makushin, 9 from Kashega, 11 from Chernofski, 21 from Nikolski, and 12 from Akutan. To his long cover letter to the Secretary of the Treasury, Applegate appended support from two other schooner owners: Hugh McGlashan of the *J.P. Ward* and W.B. Handy of the *Selma*. Another individual engaged in the hunt was Brown [Bjorn] Benson of Morzhovoi. On April 21, 1906, the agent at the North American Commercial Company reported that Benson planned to take Biorka men sea otter hunting. However, two months later the agent noted that because Benson had not fed them properly they had deserted his vessel and returned home. A few of the men came to Dutch Harbor where they reported having taken one sea otter by the time they left.²⁰

The Biorka men were able to hunt migrating fur seals during the fall and winter of 1905-1906. Deputy U.S. marshal Harmon said that he would not prosecute the killing of fur seals when taken for food “but he would like to get at the fellows that are buying the skins from the natives.”²¹ In 1908 Harmon wrote, “In the three years that I have been here there has been no persecution against the natives, for

18 “Rapid Decline of the Aleuts.” San Francisco Call, October 7, 1901.

19 A. Lanson Weeks, report of June 28, 1901. NARA, MF 720 (Alaska File of the Office of the Secretary of the Treasury, 1868-1903), Roll 9.

20 April 21 and June 21, 1906, North American Commercial Company, Log Copy Book, August 11, 1905 – October 23, 1906.

21 January 8, 1906, North American Commercial Company, Log Copy Book, August 11, 1905 – October 23, 1906.

killing seal, and there is no record in this office of any ever having been made. All the seal that come in here are pups, the skins have no value, but the meat is highly prized by the natives.”²² The Biorka men sold salted skins at Unalaska, frequently to Nadir C. Kafoury, who had a small store in opposition to the AC Company. If



Nadir C. Kafoury.
Photograph courtesy
Stephen Kafoury.

illegal, the sales were not exactly a secret. The NAC Company agent asked a group of men from Biorka how much they got for seal skins and they told him \$2.50 for each one.²³ In January 1906, the deputy U.S. commissioner, Nicholas Bolshanin, reported that Kafoury had forty skins on hand for which Biorka men had been paid \$2.50 a skin.²⁴

With less income from sea otter hunting, villagers became even more dependent on subsistence fishing and hunting. Anything that threatened these pursuits caused alarm. In February 1890 Bogoslof Island burst into another round of violent activity and ash was carried to Unalaska for several days. “The Aleuts have been terrified at all their villages on Unalaska,” George Davidson wrote, “and

they recall the traditions which relate much suffering to have occurred to them after great convulsions and earthquakes among the Islands.”²⁵ Bogoslof had been last active in 1883 and 1884, after decades of relative quiet. In 1906 another series of eruptions began. The following summer the Chain was swept by storms that prevented regular hunting. From May 12 to August 25, the men aboard the *Everett Hays* were able to be out on the water a mere 119 hours, taking six otters. Benson’s *Emma* hunted only in July and took two pelts. Both vessels focused on the area around the Sannak Reefs. Foul weather also plagued the 1908 season. Nevertheless, the *Emma* was out 45 days and took six otters. The *Everett Hays* secured 19 otters between May 17 and August 18. During one 38-day period, the *Everett Hays* was able to hunt only 11 hours, but Applegate’s men were lucky and landed among otters every time they went out.

Father Alexander Kedrovsky left Unalaska in July 1908 after 14 years of furious activity that had seen the rebuilding of the Church of the Holy Ascension into a magnificent cathedral, the defense of Orthodoxy against a concerted Protestant

22 C.C. Harman to [name blurred], November 1908. Correspondence Copy Book, 1903-1910. Pat Locke Archival Collection, Museum of the Aleutians.

23 January 13, 1906, North American Commercial Company, Log Copy Book, August 11, 1905 – October 23, 1906.

24 January 12, 1906, North American Commercial Company, Log Copy Book, August 11, 1905 – October 23, 1906.

25 Davidson, “Volcanic Eruption in the Bering Sea,” 271.



Father Alexander Kedrovsky, his wife and children. ASL-P243-1-086, Michael Z. Vinokourov Photograph Collection.

attack led by missionaries and government officials, and what would be the last round of publications in *Unangam tunuu* for over half a century. Kedrovsky had kept a close eye on village chapels and his detailed financial accounts exist in the Library of Congress. In 1896 he published a summary of conditions throughout his parish, but it contained little specific information other than that the chapels at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega were comfortable and adequately maintained. The Makushin, Kashega and Chernofski complex had a total of 177 residents in 1896, fairly evenly distributed. Makushin had 60 residents while Kashega and Chernofski had 53 and 64 respectively. Biorka had 51 residents while nearby Akutan had 74. Kedrovsky continued the distinction between creoles and Aleuts, although his reasons for doing so are unclear. For example, he divided Makushin's residents into 37 creoles and 23 Aleuts, while Biorka and Kashega were said to have all Aleut populations. (Iliuliuk was recorded as having 152 Aleuts and 137 creoles along with 21 individuals connected to clergy with the Orthodox church.)

On April 21, 1910, Congress passed the Fur Seal Act, Public Law 146. This ended the practice of leasing the Pribilof Islands' fur seal harvest to private companies and put management under the Department of Commerce and Labor. It also ended sea otter hunting within territorial waters. "I presume you noticed the new Game Regulations and perhaps are under the impression that it seriously affects my business," Applegate wrote to J.A. Sterling in Fairbanks. "I assure you it does not in the slightest. I had a long talk with Mr. Nagel, Secretary of Commerce and Labor, in whose office the regulations originated. As I do not hunt sea-otters within the Territory, but on the open ocean, outside of the limits of Alaska, the law does not apply in my case. My skins are always entered through the Custom House." Nevertheless, the regulations had an impact on the actual hunt that year as he explained. "The sea-otter hunting the past summer was a failure. My natives heard about the new regulations, and some busy bodys and trouble makers made it their special business to say things to them so that they became frightened and would not hunt longer, and I thereby lost the whole of August."²⁶ They hunted only twice while out and secured four otters.

In 1910 the *Everett Hays* was joined by a new vessel, the *Elvira*. On July 22, 1908, the Japanese vessels, *Kensai Maru* and *Saki Maru*, were seized by the Revenue Cutter *Bear* within territorial waters off St. Paul Island. They were taken to Unalaska and eventually sold at an auction where Fred Schroeder, agent for the North American Commercial Company at Dutch Harbor, purchased them for a little under \$5,000.²⁷ He renamed the *Kensai Maru* the *Elvira* and hired Christian Theodore Pedersen, who was on his way to becoming one of the best-known captains in northern waters. In April 1908, Pedersen married Sophia Reinken, daughter of the former AC Company agent at Chernofski. In 1910, her son Henry, aged 15, accompanied his stepfather on the otter hunt after an acrimonious dispute between his parents and the director of

26 Copybook. Letter to J. A. Sterling. September 17, 1910. p. 457 Papers of Samuel Applegate, 1875-1925. 0003 MS Alaska State Historical Library.

27 *Seward Gateway*, April 30, 1910.

the Jesse Lee Home where Henry had been living. Henry Swanson later provided a detailed and important account of that season.²⁸

According to Swanson, Emilian Berikoff of Unalaska was hired as chief of the 24 hunters who came from Unalaska, Biorka, Kashega, Chernofski, and Makushin (whose chief Elia Shapsnikoff was among them.) They hunted from two-man kayaks. By 1910 the Unalaska men were using dories and skiffs and most of the skin boats for this hunt came from the smaller villages. Berikoff's kayak was covered with cowhide, from animals butchered by the A.C. Company. "It worked fine," Swanson said, "except the first time they launched the baidarkies, there at Sanak. They [Berikoff and his hunting partner] were the first ones to go overboard and they started to sink! The cow skins leaked, or the seams. They had to launch a couple of baidarkies quick and go out and rescue them. But they fixed that. I guess they soaked their baidarky and oiled it."

They hunted from Unalaska to Kodiak, from March into late August. "The hunters would be out all day," Swanson said. "When they wanted to rest and walk around they'd get the baidarkies all in one bunch and it would be like a large raft. They'd take turns walking around on top." When fog closed in around the ship, a horn was used to signal the hunters. If the fog was unusually thick, a small cannon was fired. Swanson described how rifles had replaced spears.

The hunters had rifles and shotguns and spears. The only one knew how to use the spear was old man [Emelian] Berikoff. [He was about 45 years old in 1910.] Aleut spear thing was a rough thing to handle, I mean to be accurate with. They had that stick [throwing board] and held it in their hand and the spears laid flat. I know. I tried it. It takes a lot of practice to throw them straight because you have to let them go out at the right time. If you went a little further and stopped, the spear would go down. And if you held that thing a little sideways it would go up this way. They used to target practice off the schooner. The only one that really could hit anything with them was old man Berikoff and he was really good with them. He would throw one of those spears out far as he could. Of course, they were built so they floated point downward. They'd stick out of the water about a foot. They worked this wood until it did that, you know. And then he'd use that first spear as a target and throw all the others in a circle round it. He must have had 25 spears. I don't know why he had that many 'cause he never used them. They used guns, but then they had them. He'd go out there and pick up his spears. The rest of the hunters would be throwing spears in every direction! Well, but they had never used them, but he had before.²⁹

28 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 29-33

29 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 30-31.

The *Elvira* caught
in the ice,
ASL-P390-040,
Richard G. and
Mary S. Culbertson
Photograph
Collection.



It is significant that by 1910 even the men from smaller villages had lost expertise with the spear. Swanson recalled that hunters on the *Elvira* took 14 otters that summer while Applegate's crew took nine. (Officers aboard the U.S. revenue cutter *Rush* said the *Elvira* men took 12 otters.) Hunters were paid \$300 for each skin, worth over \$2,000 on the commercial market. When the *Elvira* arrived back at Unalaska on September 2, it was boarded by officers from the Revenue Cutter *Rush* who found the ship had hunted under a permit from the deputy collector of customs. Captain Foley of the Bering Sea Patrol wrote that this approval was not sufficient. "She should not be permitted again to engage in sealing or in trade," he wrote, "without proper documents."³⁰

In 1909 a new priest arrived at Unalaska with his wife and daughter. Although Alexander Panteleev's stay was briefer than Kedrovsky's, he established such deep ties with the local people that after 1934, when he became the Bishop of Alaska, he returned for extended visits. During the summer of 1910 he visited Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega along with other villages as far west as Attu. His descriptions are detailed and sympathetic. Panteleev took advantage of the *Elvira* returning sea otter hunters to their villages for his visit to Kashega and Makushin. He boarded the vessel on September 4 just as a storm descended on Unalaska Bay and kept the vessel at anchor for five days. When he arrived at Kashega, the priest found nine small barabaras. The village was permeated by the scent of salmon drying on racks. He noticed a rock weir or dam that had been constructed in the river for ensuring a good catch. Dried fish could be stored longer than smoked fish and was the staple of diet during the winter.³¹ It was eaten with seal or sea lion oil without bread or salt. Bread was a luxury. The priest was given a room in the chief's home where the walls and floor were

30 Foley to the Secretary of the Treasury. September 8, 1910. RG 26, file 611, box 1834.

31 Recorded conversation with Platonida Gromoff, Sophia Pletnikoff, and Nick Galaktionoff [with Ray Hudson]. January/February 1974.

wooden while a net hung over the ceiling area to prevent soil and grass from filtering onto the floor. Sobriety was not universal in the village, he noted, and numerous people suffered with eye infections. He learned that the population had increased by only a single individual over the past three years. The Chapel of the Transfiguration of the Lord was bright and clean. Following liturgy and communion, the villagers came to the chief's home for tea. On entering, they greeted their leader much as they would a priest. The chief sat in a corner and, as each individual approached, he extended a hand that was then taken and kissed three times.



Panteleev's trip from Kashega to Makushin was by skin boat and began with near disaster. He was dressed in a kamleika and wore Unangaġ boots. His three-holed kayak, one owned by the church, developed a serious leak a short way from shore. His oarsmen sped back to land, but the two men with him were soaked. The boat was repaired and the next day they arrived at Makushin after a five-hour trip. He went immediately to the Chapel of the Nativity and found it in beautiful shape with its iconostasis rising in two tiers from the carpeted floor. Makushin had three wooden houses and five barabaras. The population had increased by two males during the past three years. Residents were suffering from a scalp malady that produced baldness in a number of people.

Alexander Panteleev on Akutan Island, Davenport Collection. Photograph given by the Unalaska City School to the Museum of the Aleutians.

Alexander Panteleev dressed in a kamleika and standing beside his kayak, Davenport Collection. Photograph given by the Unalaska City School to the Museum of the Aleutians.



Earlier that summer, in late June, he had accompanied Biorka people on the trail that led into the mountains east of Unalaska, down the pass to Ugadaga Bay, and across the inlet to Sedanka Island. They walked through a profusion of white anemones while ravens cavorted in the air and spring birds chirped. The trip across the inlet took three hours because of headwinds, but when they arrived the entire village was on the beach and the chapel bells were ringing. Biorka had no wooden dwellings. There were ten barabaras, larger than those at Akutan and, in many respects, he found them much like regular Western homes buried in the ground. The priest was treated to tea at the chief's home while a tent was erected for him near the chapel. He gathered some sheaves of dried grass for use as a mattress. On entering the Chapel of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, he saw walls covered with decorative wallpaper and the floor carpeted with rugs. The overall impression was one of cleanliness and light. He congratulated the local people on the care they gave to it. Significantly, when listing occupations for the men at Biorka, Panteleev omitted sea otter hunting. Men fished, hunted fox and sea lions, and occasionally found summer employment on the wharves at Unalaska and Dutch Harbor. The population had remained steady over the past two years and he credited the people with living temperate and sober lives. He thought Biorka's relative proximity to Unalaska contributed to making the people more sophisticated than residents of more remote villages.

Although the priest perceived a resiliency in the people as a whole, his summary of conditions was not optimistic and he found their potential far from realized. He thought that with more opportunities they could yet develop into a strong nation. He was told that the population had declined due to disease and epidemics, and as proof he was shown numerous abandoned village sites. He concluded that people needed education, better housing, diversified

employment, and improved means of transportation. Barabaras, which he characterized as damp caves, remained necessary because of the prohibitive cost of lumber. Between nine and ten individuals lived in each home. There was no regular transportation between villages and Unalaska apart from skin boats and these were usable primarily during summer months when people arrived to trade fox skins for a pittance and to purchase goods at exorbitant prices. People occupied themselves with subsistence hunting and fishing. The preparation of dried fish for winter was of paramount importance since it formed the core of the local diet. The priest suggested that, with government assistance, Unanga could take advantage of the plentiful grass on the islands and develop cattle ranching.

At Biorka the priest brought up the idea of consolidating smaller villages, including Biorka, into a single location. The people replied that they would not leave while they could still trap fox and secure enough fish from the waters around the village. This conversation suggests Panteleev had had discussions with D.P. Foley of the U.S. Revenue Cutter service. While stationed with the Bering Sea Patrol at Unalaska for several years, Foley had recommended consolidating villages into a single location. This would, in effect, accelerate what was occurring naturally as people moved into Unalaska where there was at least the chance of employment along with access to limited services. "If the people could be gathered together in two or three villages fairly convenient to Unalaska," he wrote in 1910, "the problem of caring for them would be much simplified." He initially suggested Chernofski as the primary settlement. A year later, he recommended the consolidation take place at Unalaska where he thought there was suitable land that could be taken from excess claimed by both the AC Company and the Methodist mission, the Jesse Lee Home. He urged that Unanga men be hired to build houses and install a water system. Like Panteleev, Foley found people resistant to this suggestion. Significantly, he attributed this reluctance to cultural divisions. "To this, however, they are much opposed," he wrote. "Like other people they have a love for their native places and are moreover remnants of tribes that once waged bitter warfare against one another and some of the old animosities still live though the war spirit is dead."³²

Two years later, in 1912, H.O. Schaleben, superintendent of the southwest educational district, recommended that all Unanga west of Unalaska be relocated to Unalaska. He wrote that the infrequent travel between villages was only by kayak and was very hazardous. He found Chernofski in the most desperate straits. However, when asked why they didn't move to Unalaska "they answered that...they could not very well move since they had no houses at any other place."³³

32 Foley to Secretary of the Treasury, October 20, 1910. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1834.

33 H.O. Schaleben to W. T. Lopp, July 12, 1912. NARA RG-75, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Letters Received, Entry 804.

Foley made an impassioned plea on behalf of Aleuts:

This is but little to ask of the Government in the name of humanity, and these people are most deserving. They have never cost the Government anything except for the establishment and maintenance of two schools, one here and the other at Atka.... They have never cost a dollar for soldiers to keep them in order as have the Indians of the plains; perhaps if they had, they would not have been so long neglected. They have never had any continued medical care or treatment, no treatment at all in fact except what could be given by the surgeons of the Revenue Cutters in their occasional flying visits, and yet it is known that they are suffering, not as individuals but as a people, from some of the most dreadful known diseases....³⁴

Pervasive sickness and general ill health, the result of prolonged poverty, were reported by the service's medical officers. "The village of Akutan...is probably the most wretched in all the Aleutian Islands, with Kashega and Makushin close seconds," declared Foley in 1910.³⁵ The people at Makushin had become enervated and were "illy clad in ragged garments." The village reflected a people suffering from "favus [a disease usually affecting the scalp], trachoma, pediculosis, pulmonary tuberculosis and kindred complaints."³⁶ People lived in barabaras but were unable to make satisfactory repairs for lack of materials. Whereas once lumber had been purchased for flooring and walls, now the floors were packed dirt. Beds were platforms with dried wild rye grass. People covered themselves with "old rags and blankets."³⁷ Occasionally a few men could find employment at Unalaska, but to reach there involved a long boat trip down Makushin Bay and a six to eight hour hike across the mountains. When they brought furs to Unalaska, they received "a ruinous rate of trade with the Alaska Commercial Company, the most inimical factor in this country to the natives."

At Biorka, the homes were found to be unclean and unsanitary. Even the best contained very little furniture, and that was almost worthless. Flour, tea, and other basic foods could be purchased only at Unalaska after crossing Beaver Inlet, leaving their boats in Ugadaga Bay, and hiking "a hard trail over the hills about seven miles." He repeated Pantelev's assertion about the pittance received for fox pelts relative to the cost of goods. "The amount of money realized by the community," Foley wrote, "must be very small in comparison to their needs for food and clothing."³⁸

34 Foley to Secretary of the Treasury, October 9, 1911. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1835.

35 Foley to Secretary of the Treasury, June 28, 1910. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1834.

36 Foley to Secretary of the Treasury, August 10, 1911. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1835.

37 P.A. Carter, surgeon on the *Unalga* to his commanding officer, May 30, 1913. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1838.

38 Foley to Secretary of the Treasury, September 16, 1911. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1835.

At Chernofski, once the most profitable of sea otter hunting villages, conditions were even worse. In 1910 the people were said to be destitute.³⁹ The people were “extremely poor” and “during the winter they are in dire straits for want of food.”⁴⁰ Salmon had disappeared from the vicinity and the hunting of fur seals was forbidden.

And yet, according to other reports, people showed the resiliency that Pantelev had noted. At Makushin there was an abundance of fish and ducks and some ptarmigan. People at Kashega kept their village neat and they were better clothed. The sea around Biorka had an ample supply of fish. The barabaras built at Makushin were higher and better ventilated than those at Volcano Bay, now used as a summer camp. The Chernofski barabaras were fairly large and had good ventilation, wooden floors, glass windows, and were fairly well furnished. The people were well clothed and their homes were clean.

Disease accompanied poverty until conditions became so bad that a captain of the *Unalga* recommended to his superior that cutters not transport villagers for fear of infecting the crew. “Even the healthy appearing natives,” he wrote, “no doubt have all these diseases [,] consumption, syphilis and favus of the scalp, in a greater or less degree.”⁴¹ In contrast to this attitude, Reynolds wrote, “The people are very hospitable, and take in strangers as well as friends.”⁴²

Signed on March 8, 1911, a further regulation prohibited any hunting or killing of sea otters until November 1, 1920. A month after returning from his hunt on the *Elvira*, Fred Schroeder wrote the Bureau of Fisheries for clarification, asking if both hunting from shore and by schooners outside territorial waters were prohibited.⁴³ The *Elvira*'s hunters had taken their twelve otters at least 30 miles offshore. Shortly afterwards he wrote that the prohibition against sea otter hunting would be a great hardship on Native people. “The work around Unalaska is getting scarcer every year, the wages paid for this work are the same as they were ten years ago, while the price of provisions has advanced as much as fifty percent.” He also noted that another otter hunter, Samuel Applegate, was under the impression he could take a crew out hunting in the spring of 1911.⁴⁴

He was correct. On May 25, 1911, the Commissioner of the Bureau of Fisheries wrote to the AC Company that hunting sea otters outside the three-mile limit was permitted under current regulations. Both the *Everett Hays* and the *Elvira* took part in what would be the last sea otter hunt. The *Everett Hays* returned to

39 Foley to Secretary of the Treasury, October 20, 1910. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1834.

40 B. J. Duffy, assistant surgeon on the *Tahoma*, to the commanding officer, June 15, 1912. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1837.

41 Crisp to M.E. Reynolds, July 12, 1913. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1838.

42 Reynolds to Secretary of the Treasury, November 19, 1913. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1838.

43 Schroeder to the Bureau of Fisheries, October 4, 1910. RG 22, box 46, folder 259: Sea Otter 1910-1923.

44 Schroeder to Secretary of Commerce and Labor, November 12, 1910. RG 22, box 46, folder 259: Sea Otters 1910-1923.

Unalaska on August 26, 1911, with a catch of eight sea otters. The *Elvira*, with hunters from Unalaska, Makushin and Chernofski, came into port the next day with eleven pelts. Applegate feared regulations were about to be tightened even further. On September 10 he asked the deputy Collector of Customs at Unalaska, N.E. Bolshanin, to certify that the 23 otter skins in his possession had been legally taken “in the open ocean and outside the Territorial Limits of Alaska” between 1909 and 1911.⁴⁵

While the otter hunt had been in progress, representatives from the United States, Great Britain, Japan, and Russia had been meeting. On July 7, 1911, a Treaty for the Preservation and Protection of Fur Seals was signed in Washington, D.C. These nations agreed to preserve and protect sea otters and fur seals. One clause specifically made it illegal to “kill, capture, or pursue” sea otters outside of territorial waters. On October 21, the Commissioner of Commerce cabled the Collector of Customs in San Francisco that under the new treaty all sea otter hunting in the North Pacific Ocean and “tributary waters” will be prohibited from December 15 for the next fifteen years. When Applegate heard this treaty was being considered, he told D.P. Foley that if it were enacted he would kill off his fox on Samalga, sell his schooner, and close his store at Nikolski.⁴⁶ On April 28, 1912, he wrote to his brother that the treaty stopping all otter hunting had been signed. “So now no more will be killed by those respective citizens for the next fifteen years. Thus ends my otter hunting.”⁴⁷ The Nikolski people owed him \$830.17 for supplies he had advanced for recent hunts.⁴⁸ He would have to find other ways to collect.

In 1908 Applegate had written, “It would have been much better for me had I never started in hunting otter.” This was an exaggeration. That year he had \$3,036 worth of sea otter pelts on hand. On September 30, 1908, he shipped 20 sea otters to Alfred Fraser in New York City for transport to London. In 1909 he had \$10,885 in unsold otter skins. A photograph taken October 14, 1911, by Noah Davenport, shows a string of around 20 otters. On the reverse, Davenport wrote, “If you owned this line of skins you would be well off. They are sea otter and worth \$12,000. I took the picture for the owner.”⁴⁹ Applegate’s net profits from otter hunting, fox trapping, and his store operations for the years 1906 through 1909 amounted to over \$26,812.00.⁵⁰

45 Bolshanin, N.E. September 10, 1911. Papers of Samuel Applegate, 1875-1925. 0003 MS Alaska State Historical Library. Box 2, folder 10. (Copy received from Jeff Dickrell.)

46 Foley to Secretary of the Treasury, October 9, 1911. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1834.

47 Copybook, letter to Brother John, September 10, 1905. Papers of Samuel Applegate, 1875-1925. 0003 MS Alaska State Historical Library.

48 “Debts owed to me when ceased hunting,” Papers of Samuel Applegate, 1875-1925. 0003 MS Alaska State Historical Library.

49 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 33. Photograph from Davenport Collection, Unalaska City School. Gift of Margaret Boaz.

50 Statement of business for the past 5 years. Papers of Samuel Applegate, 1875-1925. 0003 MS Alaska State Historical Library.

The summer that sea otter hunting ended, the Revenue Cutter Service was asked to distribute about 600 barrels of seal meat and 100 kegs of seal oil from the Pribilof Islands to villages in the Chain.⁵¹ In January 1910 Joseph L. Brown, the Bureau of Indian Affairs teacher at Unalaska, distributed food to Chernofski, Kashega, Makushin, Biorka, and Akutan as he had the previous year.⁵² A people who had fashioned a world of plenty from the sea were destitute. Not only were sea otters gone, but that vital subsistence mammal the sea lion was disappearing from locations near villages. The sea itself had become impoverished.

51 May 29, 1911. NARA, RG 26, file 611-62, box 1835.

52 Brown to Harlan Updegraff, January 11, 1910. Supply Agent of the Department of the Interior to Updegraff, December 6, 1909. NARA RG-75, Letters Received. Entry 804.



Right: Alexei Meronovich Yatchmeneff; left: his son John. Photograph courtesy University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

PART TWO: THE FINAL DECADES

Chapter 8 The Last Families



Much is rightly made of population losses suffered in the eastern Aleutians during the late 18th and early 19th centuries, for which Russian promyshlenniks and administrators of the Russian-American Company are excoriated for their respective roles. What is less recognized, however, is that at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, under U.S. administration, Unanga communities experienced a population decline of almost comparable severity. The numbers were necessarily smaller—given the base population—but the result was nearly as devastating. After having reached its lowest point in the early 1820s, the population in the region had started a slow recovery. In 1830 Veniaminov recorded 514 residents on Unalaska and Sedanka islands, including the four villages of Chernofski, Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka with 164 residents. There were, at that time, a number of additional small villages on Unalaska Island. By 1880 these other villages had disappeared, and the overall population of Unalaska and Sedanka islands had increased to 763 while the four villages stood at 371. Thirty years later, in 1910, the collective population of the two islands had dropped to 434, significantly lower than in either 1830 or 1880. The overall population from Attu to Akutan had decreased nearly fifty percent, from 1,364 to 729. Biorka, Makushin, Kashega, and Chernofski had plummeted to a combined population of 171, a decline of over fifty percent.¹ This loss paralleled the disappearance of the sea otter and was propelled by poverty, poor nutrition, inadequate housing, scarcity of affordable fuel, and the lack of sea mammals for food and raw

1 At Unalaska where conditions were better than in any other village, there were 125 births and 171 deaths between 1900 and 1910. R.H. Creel, "Surgeon's report for work done 10 August to 30 September, 1910" in D.P. Foley, October 20, 1910. (NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1834) This loss accurately reflects the difference between the U.S. Census for 1900 (358) and the population figure Creel received from church records in 1910. Using the U.S. Census for 1910 [263], an even greater loss is seen.

materials, as well as deaths from epidemic diseases. It was exacerbated by the ineffective enforcement of regulations enacted to prevent the sea otter's extermination. It was accompanied by a steady immigration of desperate and opportunistic newcomers, propelled by greed, ignorance, self-righteousness, and governmental paternalism. The number of Unangaŋ who left the region to settle in Washington, California, and elsewhere was small. A few students were sent to Indian boarding schools; a few women married white men and left; and a few members of wealthier families (such as the Simeon Melovidov family from St. Paul) chose and had the means to leave the islands. These instances, however, were peripheral contributors to the overall population loss. The decline would grind on into the next decade, threatening the viability of these villages and bringing the very survival of Unangaŋ as a people to a critical point.

For generations, sea otter hunting had structured life. Its termination, although gradual and predictable, produced fissures or, to give them a more accurate description, chasms within villages. These had to be filled or bridged if communities were to survive. The foundations of village economies altered, requiring a host of new talents if leaders were to be effective. Although much of the subsistence calendar remained fixed, who participated in subsistence activities was influenced by absences occasioned by periodic employment away from the village (usually at Unalaska or the Pribilof Islands), by the presence of more men in the villages during what had been traditional otter hunting periods, and by the introduction of new technologies, principally the replacement of skin boats with wooden skiffs. Patterns of child rearing altered as parental and community expectations changed.

The census agent in 1900 had declared that with the loss of the sea otter, Unangaŋ hunting skills had become useless. Coupled with isolation and generations of dependency on the AC and NAC companies—“government-fostered monopolies” in the words of the agent—village residents had lost their “individuality” along with economic resources. “Numerically he is decreasing,” the agent declared, distancing himself with late 19th century jargon. “Physically and morally degenerating, and his extinction as an Ethnographical unity is at hand.”² The question of what it meant to be Unangaŋ, of course, was nothing new; identity had been in flux for 150 years.

As the story of the three villages approaches its final decades, it is possible to trace the outlines of a few families although, as with the 19th century, it is difficult to understand in detail how specific persons met—or did not meet—the challenges facing individuals, families, and communities. In one sense, there are far too many individuals to trace all family histories here. In another sense, the numbers are very small. In 1910 Kashega had only four men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-nine, while Makushin

2 James G. Blaine to William A. Kelly, Unalaska, July 21, 1900. Following “Unalaska” in the 12th census records.

and Biorka each had ten. There were seven women at Kashega, eight at Makushin, and ten at Biorka in the same age range. There were a handful of older residents. Biorka and Kashega each had seven adults between forty and fifty-nine while Makushin had only three.

Makushin

In 1910 Makushin's forty-seven residents were divided among ten families. The eldest resident in all three villages lived here. This was Matrona Krukoff, a sixty-year-old widow, living with her twenty-one-year-old son Elia [Il'ia] and his younger brother, Matfey, fifteen. The boys were listed as Krukoffs, but ten years earlier when she had lived at Kashega and been married to John Borenin (the first)³, Matrona's two sons along with their older brother, Stepan, had been Borenins. They could trace their ancestry (through their father's mother) to Abraham Yatchmenev, the starosta of the chapel at Kashega in the 1850s, and in this way they were distant relatives of Alexei Yatchmeneff who had become chief of Unalaska in 1902. The 1910 census was taken by Vasilii Shaiashnikov, Yatchmeneff's predecessor as chief, and it is probable that he recorded the names the boys were actually using. Before long, however, both Elia and Matfey returned to using their father's surname. Paradoxically, in 1942, it was the family of Elia Borenin, a man from Kashega, that became the last Unanga family living at Makushin.

As the 20th century began, the families with the deepest ties to Makushin were the Kastromitins, Telanoffs, Krukoffs, Petelins, and Petukoffs. The Kastromitins, represented by a single family in the 1900 census, disappeared from Makushin during the next decade; however, this family name resurfaces at Kashega. There were four Telanoff families in 1900, but only one in 1910. In 1900 there were two Krukoff families, including that of Ivan Grigorovich Kriukov, the man who was the primary official at the church. By 1910, however, this family was represented only by the widow Matrona, the mother of Elia and Matfey Borenin. Family names that disappeared from census records continued to have a presence through the female line. Thus, Nick Galaktionoff's grandmother, Marva Petukoff, had a Kastromitin grandmother. The disappearance of these names, however, was symbolic of losses suffered by villages.

Two families had been primarily responsible for establishing the chapel at Makushin, that of Joseph Petelin and that of Gregory Petukhov [Petukoff]. By 1900, the Petelins were no longer present. Thomas Petelin, the last agent for the AC Company, had moved into Iliuliuk when the company closed its Makushin station in the 1890s. There were three Petukoff families in 1900, if the widow Marva Petukoff and her son Peter are counted as they should be since by 1910 he had married and started his own family. There were two other Petukoff families; that of Innokentii and Elena Petukoff and their daughter, and that of Vasilii and Elizaveta with their children Anna, Yakim and Matfey.

3 When two persons had identical names, they were designated "first" and "second" according to age.

The Lekanoff, Galaktionoff, and Shapsnikoff families of Makushin trace their families to men who moved into Makushin in the second half of the 19th century. According to Nicholai Lekanoff, his father, Simeon Nikolaiovich Lekanoff, was born at Unalaska where he attended the school operated by the Orthodox church. The 1878 census for Iliuliuk includes Nikolai Lekanoff (written as Lezanove) with his wife, three sons, and a daughter. According to Nick, Simeon Lekanoff moved to Makushin while his brother settled on St. George Island. Stepan “Lehanof” was fourteen when he arrived on St. George in 1884 as a “servant” in the family of Rev. Innokentii Lestnikoff. Several early St. George census reports place his birth at St. Michaels. According to family tradition, he entered the Lestnikoff family following the death of his mother when her clothes caught fire at the stove.⁴ Father Lestnikoff, born on Attu and educated in Sitka, served the church at Unalaska from 1873 until he moved to St. George as a priest in 1882. It is certainly possible that both Stepan and Simeon Lekanoff had been students at the school founded by Veniaminov and consolidated by Bishop Nestor in the early 1880s. Permanent residence on the Pribilof Islands was restricted to those present around the time of the Alaska purchase, but in 1889 Stepan was “adopted” by Father Lestenkoff and the following year he had married and established his family as an integral part of the St. George community.⁵ The date of Simeon’s arrival at Makushin has not been established but it may have been around the same time that Stepan went to St. George. Simeon may have followed his older brother, Andrei, who had married Evdokia, a woman from Makushin. Andrei signed the 1886 sea otter petition. In any event, by 1897 there were three Lekanoff men with families at Makushin, all reportedly born at Unalaska. Andrei was 38, Nikolai was 26, and Simeon was 24. Simeon was married to Julita (Oleta) Pankoff. By 1900 Andrei had died, leaving his widow and three children. Nicholai, with his wife and daughter, was still at Makushin but he eventually moved to Unalaska where he perished in the 1919 pandemic. Simeon survived longest and became the head of a large extended family. He was known as a fine singer, served as starosta for the chapel, and by 1900 he and his wife Julita had two daughters, aged one and two. These children appear to have died young because they are not listed in the 1910 census where two sons and a one-year-old daughter are found. The eldest son was Constantine who himself became the patriarch of an extended family at Unalaska. The daughter was Parascovia, destined to become Nick Galaktionoff’s mother.

Arseni and Tikhon Galaktionoff were from Atka. They were descendents of Ivan Konstantinovich Galaktionov who was born in 1803, educated at Kodiak and New Archangel, and served as a physician and school teacher at Atka, beginning in the 1830s. He retired in 1847 after 26 years service with the Russian-American Company. At Atka, he and his wife Natalia had a large family. By 1878 Arseni and his mother were living at Unalaska with his younger sister Marina, and three younger brothers: Antipater, Lazar, and Aleksander. There

4 Anne S. McGlashan, interview with the author, April 30, 1986. She described him as “a big, tall man with bright red hair and beard and blue eyes.”

5 The fear of deportation from the Pribilof Islands was so great that even in 1986, concerned about his descendents, Anne McGlashan cautioned me about revealing his origins.

was also an Anna Galaktionoff, 18, and her younger brother Basil living there. Arseni Galaktionoff was an active sea otter hunter in 1886. He signed the 1886 petition and is included among hunters from Makushin for the 1886-1887 winter season. In 1897 he and his wife, Lubova (from Morshovoi), had three children.

Tikhon Avramovich Galaktionoff was also living at Makushin. He was married to Marva Grigorievna Petukoff whose paternal grandfather was Gregory Petukoff, the Russian-American Company employee stationed at Makushin, while her grandmother was Marva Kostromitin. Tikhon and Marva had several children including Evdokia, Gabriel, Akenfa, and Agafia, before Tikhon died in June 1902. Akenfa would become the father of Nick Galaktionoff, among others, and it is significant that Nick credited his grandmother, a woman with deep generational ties to Makushin, for the oral traditions he shepherded into the 21st century. After her husband died, Marva married Ioann S. Borenin and in 1905 they had a son whom, with little originality, they named John.⁶

The short tragic life of Gabriel Galaktionoff, Tikhon and Marva's eldest son, suggests the unraveling that was happening within Unanga communities as one era transitioned to another. There were insoluble problems. In 1898, when he was about ten years old and a year after he had been recorded living at Makushin, he was discovered living in an abandoned dory on the beach at Unalaska.⁷ The U.S. deputy marshal took him to the Jesse Lee Home where he was admitted on August 6. Details are lacking, but in late November 1906 Dr. A.W. Newhall, then the director of the Home and a man of expansive good will, filed a complaint against Gabriel for unknown reasons. He was taken to Seward where he appeared before U.S. commissioner L.S. Howlett on January 7, Orthodox Christmas. He was declared insane and transported to the Mt. Ivy [Mt. Tabor] Insane Asylum in Oregon where he died.

In 1910 the chief of Makushin was Elia Michael Shapsnikoff, yet another person with deep ties to Iliuliuk where in 1878 there were at least nine Shapsnikoff households. The 1886 petition contains numerous men with variants of the Shapsnikoff surname. By 1897 Elia and his wife, Subove, were at Makushin, her home village, where they had a son and two daughters. Three years later, he was married to eighteen year-old Fedosia and the only child in the home was eight-year old Daniel. By 1910 their family had grown to include two daughters and a son.

Kashega

By the time Matrona Borenin had been widowed, married a Krukoff and moved to Makushin with her sons Elia and Matfey, her oldest child, Katrina, was herself married and starting a family in Kashega. She and Ivan A. Denisoff had married in 1899. Ten years later, however, on January 21, 1909, her body was found in the

6 Ioann S. Borenin's name is found in Murray and Corey, "Aleut Weavers," 4.

7 Hooper's 1897 census lists him as 9. The Jesse Lee Home records give his age as 6 in 1898.

creek. Residents suspected she had fallen victim to outsiders, perhaps murdered by Japanese fishermen who were known to occasionally land on the Pacific side of the island. The death was reported to Unalaska in early March, but it was late May before the marshal reached the village. Through an interpreter (George King) he conducted interviews, and then he and two men hiked to the Pacific side. Four months of winter had erased any trace of a Japanese camp and the case was left unsolved.⁸ Katrina died leaving Ivan with two young children.

The Denisoffs, male and female, were inextricably bound to Kashega. Ivan had an older brother, Nikifor, who had been born in 1863. He would eventually outlive his siblings, three wives, and most of his nine children, and be evacuated after the Japanese attack on Unalaska in 1942. Ivan and Nikifor's sister, Vasilisa, married Moses Borenin and was the mother of George Borenin, the last chief



of the village. Moses himself died in 1900 leaving Vasilisa with three daughters and two sons whom she raised, no doubt with traditional assistance from their maternal uncles, Ivan and Nikifor Denisoff. A member of the Denisoff family was chief of Kashega during the second decade of the century, but who exactly remains unknown.⁹ A likely candidate was Afanasii Denisoff—likely because he was listed first in Hooper's 1897 census and in the 1910 and 1920 federal census reports. His name also heads a 1916 petition from the villages of Kashega and Chernofski.¹⁰ He had been born in 1860.

A stone weir in the river at Kashega. Alice Moller Collection, courtesy of AB Rankin.

The Borenin, Kudrin, and Yatchmenoff families had been established at Kashega for generations, and, like the Denisoffs, they continued living in the village through the final decades. Ivan Ivanovich Kudrin [John J. Kudrin], who had been the reader in the church in the 1890s, married Efimia Krukoff a few years after the death of his first wife in 1901. Ivan and Efimia had four sons and three daughters. Five of these children along with their widowed mother lived at Kashega until the outbreak of World War II. Another Kudrin family was that of Ivan's brother Eliah. As with so many families, Eliah's first wife, Paraskovia Petukoff, died early, leaving a son Alexei. Eliah then married Pelagia Sivtsov and their son Cornelius Kudrin would be one of the last two residents of Kashega. Alexei Kudrin, like his mother, would die as a young adult but not before he had married Sophia Borenin [later Sophie Pletnikoff]—one of the key figures in the preservation of Unanga culture and the oral history of Kashega.

8 Ledger Book. U.S. Marshal. Criminal Docket, Unalaska, July 8, 1901-June 76, 1909. Pat Locke Archival Collection, Museum of the Aleutians.

9 On Aug. 18, 1918, "Chief Denasoff at Kashega" was treated for a migraine. RG 26, file 611, Box 1845.

10 Petition, November 19, 1916, to H.C. Kavanaugh and Paul Buckley. Attachment to letter from Paul Buckley to Secretary of the Treasury, January 12, 1917. RG 22, #91.

There were two John Yatchmenoffs at Kashega. John B. Yatchmenoff (the first) served as chief of the village for many years until his death in 1932. He was married to Laressa Talanov and, although they had no children of their own, they raised Paraskovia Kalimoff, a girl from Chernofski who died young. He was about ten years older than John Yatchmenoff (number two) who married Helen Golley of Atka. They rarely lived at Kashega, but spent most of their time at Unalaska, where six of their seven children were born.

Biorka

Of the three villages, Biorka suffered the gravest population loss, declining 70 percent between 1878 and 1910, down from 141 to 42. This involved not only the disappearance of complete families but also the reduction in the number of family units among those names that survived. Five families managed to maintain a continuous presence between 1900 and 1920: Makarin, Yatchmenoff, Siftsoff, Kozloff, and the doomed Popoff.

In 1910 Terentii Makarin's household consisted of himself and his two adult sons, Andrew and Elia, now 22 and 20. Terentii himself was 57. For him to have been married three times was not unusual. His first wife, Olga Petroff, had died in May 1888, leaving him with Matfey, age six, and Pariscovia, age three. His second wife, Marva Lukanin, died in 1892, leaving Andrew and Elia, born in 1889 and 1891. He next married Irena Kochutun, with whom he had Peter, born in 1897. After Irena died in September 1900, perhaps from the "great sickness" that swept coastal Alaska, he did not remarry.

In 1910, Vasilii Yatchmenoff, in his late forties, and Jacob Kozloff, in his mid thirties, both had families while Gabriel Siftsoff, in his early twenties, was not yet married. Kerik Popoff, in his late thirties, was married and his eldest son, Ignatii, was almost 20 and about to start his own family. Ten years earlier there had been another Yatchmenoff family, that of Gregorii and Maria. On November 21, 1900, she was found "stabbed through the skull" on the beach. Charges against her husband were filed by Leontii Siftsoff, the Unangaâ deacon at Unalaska. Five witnesses came from Biorka to testify. Each witness was paid \$6.50 for their travel and day in court. Siftsoff received \$3.10 for travel costs and \$2.00 for his translation services.¹¹ Sufficient evidence was presented for a trial, and Yatchmenoff was to have been sent to Sitka. Judge James Wickersham, however, was in Nome on his traveling circuit and, learning that there were two murder cases at Unalaska, decided to take the court there. In the second case, Fred Hardy was accused of killing three people on Unimak Island. Told it would be impossible to find enough jurors at Unalaska, Wickersham had 16 grand jurors and 18 trial jurors travel aboard the *St. Paul*. The grand jury indicted both Hardy and Yatchmenoff. Witnesses were again brought from Biorka, but on August 26 Wickersham noted in his diary that they were "about to fail as

James Wickersham,
district judge for Alaska
1900-1908.

www.rootsweb.ancestry.com



¹¹ Ledger Book, May 18, 1901-July 2, 1901. Pat Locke Archival Collection, Museum of the Aleutians.

witnesses for fear that if he is found guilty he will be hung. They would be willing to tell the truth if he was only to go to the penitentiary but if he is to hang they will be dumb.”¹²

Just as with the 1878 incident involving Makushin and Unalaska people, the residents of Biorka appear to have preferred banishment, rather than death, for the crime of murder. The trial began on September 9, a few hours after Hardy’s jury had found him guilty. The next day, the jury brought in a guilty verdict against Gregorii Yatchmenoff. That afternoon both men were sentenced. Hardy was to be taken to Nome and hanged. Yatchmenoff was given twenty years at McNeils Island Penitentiary in Washington. The fate of his widowed mother and the three children in the family is unrecorded. By the time newspapers picked up the story, the murder at Biorka had ballooned so that readers learned how a “Unimak Indian” had pushed his three wives off a cliff.¹³

This event became part of oral history. Nick Galaktionoff recalled Alex Ermeloff telling how a woman had been attacked and killed by one of the spectral outlaws or “bogeymen” known as Outside Men at Sedanka. Her husband had been innocent, but had been convicted and sentenced to twenty years hard labor. He returned to the Aleutians after serving time. “He stayed around here for about five years,” Nick said, “then passed away.”¹⁴

Like Makushin, two families that played pivotal roles at Biorka began when two men immigrated. There had long been Lukanins in the village, but in 1900 no Lukanin family was present. The most prominent Lukanin had been from Atka. Ivan Lukanin had a distinguished career with the Russian-American Company during the second quarter of the 19th century. He married Elizabeth Bogdanova from Unalaska.¹⁵ Kerik Lukanin had been born at Biorka around 1869, but he lived at Iliuliuk until he married Terentii Makarin’s daughter Pariscovia. They settled at Biorka. Alex Ermeloff, the man who would become chief of Biorka, was probably from Nikolski where the Ermeloffs were a long-established family. He married Anesia Siftsoff of Biorka and moved to the village. By 1910 they had a two-year-old son, Ruff, and three daughters: Anesia, Sophia, and Ephrosenia.

Challenges

Residents in the three villages faced a variety of challenges, none deeper than subsistence during a period of declining natural resources. People needed to eat and clothe themselves. Cash was also required to purchase household goods, hunting equipment, clothing, and a few of the “luxuries” the sea otter years had made commonplace. Unanga communities on and near the Alaska Peninsula had both codfish and salmon industries to fall back on when sea otter hunting declined. These were only peripherally available to residents of the three villages.

12 Diary of James Wickersham, January 1 through September 29, 1901. Alaska State Library—Historical Collections. MS 107, Diary 2.

13 San Francisco Call, September 3, 1901.

14 Galaktionoff, Nick, recorded in Aleut, March 26, 1976, translated by Ishmael Gromoff.

15 Grinev, Kto Est Kto, 314.

The young needed education—both in English and western skills and in those traditional practices that could be put to practical use. Elders were equipped to teach traditional skills and consequently boys like Andrew Makarin and George Borenin learned the craft of hunting from baidarkas although they would never be sea otter hunters. Literacy was also taught, but it was in *Unangam tunuu* or Russian, the languages the people themselves spoke and read. In a 1916 petition signed by men from Kashega and Chernofski all the signatures are in Russian script, except for that of Cornelius Kudrin.¹⁶ Cornelius had attended both the public school and the Orthodox boarding school at Unalaska. A critical challenge to village survival had its roots in what had helped preserve much Unanga culture throughout the past century: the willingness and ability to assimilate whatever might benefit their lives.

Although Biorka had been on its own for a decade or more by 1910, the interdependency that had united Chernofski, Kashega and Makushin was unraveling and each of these three villages began to stand or fall on its own. If they had ties to any other village, it was to Iliuliuk or Unalaska whose economy, in the words of Dorothy Jones, was “uncertain, unstable, and volatile” for the first forty years of the century.¹⁷ In addition, Unanga residents were cut off from effective participation in affairs by language, religion and race. Despite the efforts of Vasilii Shaiashnikov, chief from 1887 to 1902, and his successor, the renowned Alexei Yatchmeneff, Unalaska continued to be a community controlled by outsiders. Every position of power, from deputy U.S. commissioners and marshals to school teachers and postmasters, was filled by non-Natives. The only exceptions were the brief tenures of Kathryn Dyakanoff Sellers as a teacher and Olga Reinken Bolshanin as postmaster. (Both had been educated at the Protestant Jesse Lee Home and the Carlisle Indian School.) Those Unalaska Unanga who were able to participate in community or territorial elections did so by virtue of being recognized as something other than Unanga. Critical differences developed between “urbanized” Unanga at Unalaska and those living in outlying villages. These differences increased the difficulties experienced when the more rural residents chose or were forced to move into the larger community.

Despite a deeply rooted resiliency, the generation born around the turn of the century faced challenges as critical as any encountered since the rise of the Russian-American Company a century earlier. The transformations required for survival were complicated by the fact that they had to be tackled not from within relatively self-contained villages, but within in a larger society where Unanga were increasingly marginalized. How the generation born at the end of the sea otter hunting era met these diverse challenges determined the strength each community possessed as World War II descended across the Aleutians.

16 Petition, November 19, 1916, to H.C. Kavanaugh and Paul Buckley. Attachment to letter from Paul Buckley to Secretary of the Treasury, January 12, 1917. RG 22, #91.

17 Jones, *Aleuts in Transition*, 28.



Looking across the lakes toward Volcano Bay. Photograph by Ray Hudson.

Chapter 9 An Uncertain Future



With the end of sea otter hunting on the horizon, men from the three villages depended more and more on fox trapping during winter months to supplement their meager sea otter income. Trappers traveled to Unalaska to sell red and cross fox pelts. For a few years—while the two Unalaska stores, the AC Company and Nadir Kafoury’s store, were in competition with the North American Commercial Company store at Dutch Harbor—there was the possibility of securing slightly higher prices. The NAC Company agent noted some of this activity in his log:

January 13, 1905: “Makushin and Cashega natives in today with a few baskets but no skins. They sold all their skins in Unalaska.”

March 18, 1905: “Makushin natives in but sold all skins in Unalaska.”

November 7, 1905: “The Makushin natives were over today, and we purchased quite a number of fox skins from them.”

November 14, 1905: “There were two Biorca natives over today buying some things. They had some fox skins but they sold them to Kafourey; he paid them \$3.00 for red fox.”

December 6, 1905: “The Makushin natives were in today. They brought in quite a number of fox skins. We got a fine silver gray fox from them. It is almost black. We paid them \$75.00 for it.”

March 13, 1906: “The Biorca natives were here today; they evidently sold quite a lot of furs in Unalaska as they had plenty of money.”



North American Commercial Company buildings at Dutch Harbor, UAA-hmc-1011-35a, McKeown Family photographs, Archives & Special Collections, Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage.

Unfortunately, extant records are insufficient to even estimate the total amount of villages received from trapping. What is clear is that men from the three villages had little involvement in blue fox farming or trapping, a business that was developing during this period. It was most successful when an entire island was leased from the government and stocked with blue fox becoming, in effect, a self-sustaining fox farm thanks to previously unmolested bird colonies. Samuel Applegate of Unalaska had been attracted to the business in the early 1890s and by 1897 he had stocked Samalga Island, off the southern tip of Umnak, followed by Ogliuga and Skagul—two of the Delarof Islands east of Amchitka.¹ He employed Nikolski men to trap for him. A.B. Somerville was another early fox farmer, and he concentrated on Attu.

“Kashega, Biorka, and Makushin didn’t have an island for the blue-fox trapping,” said Henry Swanson when asked why these villages had disappeared while Nikolski on Umnak Island had endured.² The reasons were complex, as Henry acknowledged, but the lack of a fox island was certainly a major contributor. Despite their involvement in fox trapping, neither Nikolski nor Attu saw an improvement in living conditions, especially during the first two decades of the century. Securing an island required an application process that was difficult for

¹ Bailey, *Introduction of Foxes*, 14-15. Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 65.

² *Cuttlefish Two*, 53.

non-English speakers unaccustomed to government bureaucracy. At Unalaska, men turned for assistance to Nicholas Bolshanin, the deputy U.S. commissioner. He had arrived at Unalaska from Sitka in 1905. In 1910 he married Olga C. Reinken, the daughter of Adolph and Alexandra Reinken, and a 1909 graduate of Carlisle Industrial School in Pennsylvania.³ Bolshanin was a controversial character with an inimical relationship with men connected to the AC Company. As he said to Donald Stevenson, a game warden at Unalaska, “The town is small; the factions here are many.” If anyone did anything illegal “the whole town of Unalaska would know all of the facts and more, too, within one hour.” Officials would be “about the last to hear about it, but it would be sure to get around.”⁴ As though to give credence to Bolshanin’s statement, Albert C. Goss asserted that Bolshanin only agreed to submit fox island applications if he were taken on as a “silent partner” and received, according to rumors, one-fourth of the profits. Goss, a friend of Samuel Applegate and of the AC Company, reported that Emelian Berikoff had turned down Bolshanin’s offer because the commissioner had “wanted too much.”⁵

There are no records of men from Kashega or Makushin leasing islands prior to 1920. Their trapping continued in traditional ways on Unalaska Island itself. “They have hard work to make a living out of the few foxes they catch,” Paul Buckley wrote about Kashega and Chernofski in 1917.⁶ Kerik Popoff of Biorka secured a lease to Old Man Rocks and the Signals in 1916 although, according to Stevenson, they were “nothing but rocks and have no value as fox islands.” Popoff stocked nearby Egg Island—either purchasing blue fox from Bolshanin for this purpose or taking them from Unalga Island (an island leased by Bolshanin and L.A. Lavigne). “They are reported to be a bunch of thieves,” the warden wrote about Popoff and his unnamed companions.⁷ Alexei Ermeloff of Biorka leased part of the Baby Islands in 1916 as did Alexei Yatchmeneff the same year. For practical purposes, fox trapping by men from all three villages remained a part-time occupation and provided minimal income.

When winter trapping ended, men from the three villages occasionally found employment at Unalaska, coaling ships, sacking coal for shipment to the Pribilof Islands, working at construction, and helping with pile-driving timbers for new docks. Again, when both large companies were in operation, there was a bit of competition. Before Father Kashevaroff set off on a trip by baidarka to the villages on Unalaska on June 22, 1903, he asked the NAC Company agent if he wanted any laborers. “I told him to send us ten of the best he could find,” the

3 They were married “in the village of Dutch Harbor,” June 12, 1910 by J.L. Brown, deputy U.S. Commissioner. Misc. Records #2, Peninsula Precinct, Third Division, Alaska, page 11.

4 Stevenson, Donald H. “Reindeer at Unalaska Islands.” March 23, 1921. SIA, RU 7176, box 20, file 1.

5 A.C. Goss to Samuel Applegate, Unalaska, November 9, 1916, inclosing a letter from Goss to Harry J. Christoffers. Papers of Samuel Applegate, 1875-1925. 0003 MS Alaska State Historical Library.

6 Paul Buckley to William G. McAdoo, Jan. 12, 1917. NARA, RG 22, Bureau of Fisheries, #91.

7 Donald H. Stevenson, *Aleutian Islands. Report of Fox Propagation, Character of The Island Etc—*. SIA, RU 7176, Field Reports, Report on Islands within the Aleutian Islands Reservation, 1921-1924, box 20, folder 2.

agent wrote, “and to tell them we would give them a place to live here while they were working.” Thirteen men from Makushin arrived seven days later and were put to work. When they learned that a white man was getting 25¢ an hour, they went on a temporary strike demanding the same. He was, in fact, getting \$2.00 a day, but he boarded himself.

Their Chief in Unalaska told them not to work here unless we paid them the same. We told the Natives what we had paid the white man; and also told them we would not pay them anymore than they had been getting. I guess what the Chief told them did not cut much figure, for we had all the Natives we wanted today.⁸

Or else, the agent’s explanation made sense. At times the NAC Company was unable to get enough workers as they were employed by the AC Company or working at the mine that was being developed at Huntsville, a few miles out of the village in Captains Bay. “Have seven natives sacking coal for St. George Island,” wrote the NAC Company agent on April 23, 1906.

I didn’t want to have it sacked yet, but I was afraid if I waited until next month we might not be able to get men, as the A.C. Co. will have a coal ship some time during May and I think it is quite likely work will commence in the mine above Unalaska next month, and if it does, it is quite likely most of the Unalaska natives will be employed there.⁹

On May 8, 1906, news of the great San Francisco earthquake arrived. The AC Company headquarters building was consumed in the subsequent fire. On June 6 word arrived that because of the disaster the company was unable to continue support for the Huntsville mine. A week later the owners decided to press on even without the company’s backing. By June 20 with 15 Unanga employed at the mine and others out subsistence fishing, the NAC Company agent had “considerable trouble in getting natives to coal” a ship for them. Most of the Unalaska Natives were working for the AC Company unloading freight or coaling a revenue cutter. He was able to hire men from Makushin. To make matters worse, six prospectors arrived in July to investigate sulfur deposits on the volcano.

Whether they received money for furs or earned it by working for one of the companies at Unalaska, the allure of goods in the store often meant the money went as quickly as it was received. In August 1903, however, after they had been paid for work done at the NAC Company, the Makushin men “put their money back in the safe for us to keep for them.” They kept it there until they returned home a few days later.¹⁰

8 June 22 and June 29, 1903, North American Commercial Company, Log Copy Book, May 31, 1903—September 16, 1903.

9 April 23, 1906, North American Commercial Company, Log Copy Book, August 11, 1905—October 23, 1906.

10 August 15 and 17, 1903, North American Commercial Company, Log Copy Book, May 31, 1903—September 16, 1903.

Commercial fishing, although initiated by outsiders, held the promise of economic improvement for Makushin and Kashega. As early as 1904 sites were claimed at Volcano Bay for “Canning, Trading and Manufacturing Purposes.” In 1909 Nicholas Bolshanin had recommended that the government send two schooners to train Native men in catching, salting, and marketing cod and other fish. He said that at the present time, one white man with the apparatus at his command could do as much as six Native fishermen.¹¹ In January 1912 a cannery or salting site, along with water rights to the creek, was claimed at Makushin Village by W. B. Hastings, the deputy U.S. marshal at Unalaska. He did the same for a location at “old Makusin village” at Volcano Bay. James J. Osmund of Astoria, Oregon, appointed Hastings his attorney for a similar claim at Volcano Bay, next to Hastings’ own claim.¹² A year later Thomas Snow filed for a trade and manufacturing site at Kashega, with Cornelius Kudrin as his witness.¹³

Nothing actually developed, however, until Pacific American Fisheries entered the picture. PAF had operated salmon canneries in Puget Sound and Alaska since 1899. In 1914 Robert Forbes became the general manager for Alaska, and in December 1915 he submitted a petition to the Department of Commerce seeking permission to establish a salmon cannery “within the Aleutian Islands Reservation.” The petition was signed by 109 men from several villages including Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka. It appears to have been drafted by Alexei Yatchmeneff, “Chief Aleutian Islands,” and Leonti Siftsoff, reader at the Holy Ascension church. “Our means of earning a livelihood is limited to such an extent that at times we barely have enough to live on,” the petition began before acknowledging support for the planned cannery.¹⁴ It was dated September 29, 1915, but, of course, it took several weeks if not months to secure all the signatures.

Forbes had been in communication with Nicholas Bolshanin who enthusiastically supported the idea of a salmon cannery in the Makushin area and arranged for the petition. In his further attempt to discredit Bolshanin, A.C. Goss described how the commissioner quietly went “about among the natives asking them to sign same. Whenever he saw a native in town from any of the outside villages he would call him into his office and have him sign the paper and then caution him to say nothing about it. None of the white people in Unalaska knew of this petition being circulated at the time. It is said that for the signatures and for obtaining the consent of the Department he was promised to be put in charge of the cannery as manager if enough fish were to be had to make it a success.”¹⁵

11 Mrs. R.H. Young to E.E. Brown, Bureau of Education, February 8, 1909. NARA, RG-75, Letters Received.

12 Misc. Records, 3rd Judicial District at Unalaska, pp. 23-25.

13 Misc. Records, 3rd Judicial District at Unalaska, p. 35.

14 Petition addressed to William C. Redfield, Secretary of Commerce, September 29, 1915. NARA, RG 22, 10439.

15 A.C. Goss to Applegate, Unalaska, November 9, 1916, inclosing a letter to Harry J. Christoffers, assistant agent, Bureau of Fisheries, “A few notes concerning Bolshanin, Deputy Collector of Customs, stationed at Unalaska 1916.” Alaska State Library, Samuel Applegate Papers, MS-3, box 2, folder 2.

Bolshanin traveled to the Makushin area to locate the best site and chose Makushin Village itself, with its wide stream. It was a central location between Kashega to the south and Wislow, located on the north side of the island at a fine salmon stream. A secondary location was found inside Makushin Bay at a site that was “almost land locked and with all the good qualities desired.” He attempted to estimate the amount of available fish by calculating from what Makushin villagers dried for their own use. He was told the fish were “as thick as kelp.” People at Makushin fished in the local stream using a small seine and took about 13,500 fish per year, or about 1,500 for each of the nine families. “At Kashega,” he wrote, “where it is claimed are more salmon and more of a population 20,000 fish is generally put up.” He figured that with good equipment over twenty-five times that amount could be secured. Bolshanin thought that utilizing local labor would be sufficient. Villagers were knowledgeable about salting and using a drag seine; however, he thought they would need supervision in the use of purse seines.¹⁶

On October 4, 1915, Bolshanin claimed a saltery site at “New Makushin Village” along with a claim for water from Makushin creek. The claim was witnessed by the same Emelian Berikoff who had supposedly objected to Bolshanin’s dealing relative to fox permits. Bolshanin also claimed a second site at the head of Makushin Bay in an unnamed cove that he called Bolshanin Cove; this was witnessed by Alex Tutiakoff. The following year, on April 5, Bolshanin sold the two sites and water rights to the Pacific American Fisheries for \$75.00.¹⁷ (In 1916 Bolshanin, on behalf of the Lucky Strike Mining Claim, filed a mining claim in Anderson Bay, “in a westerly direction from the right arm of Anderson Bay, in Makushin Bay, near a creek, about 1 mile from the beach.” He enlisted Vasilii Petikoff and Peter Petikoff, along with Paul Buckley, as locators.¹⁸)

In the summer of 1916 the Pacific American Fisheries had three vessels fishing at Kashega for a cannery that they had established deep inside Makushin Bay at a location known as Cannery Point. “The people [at Kashega] appeared prosperous,” wrote Captain B.L. Reed of the *McCulloch* that summer, “and there was on hand a large supply of salmon. It is reported that nine men from the village were employed at the Makushin Bay cannery.”¹⁹ At the same time, Chernofski was described as “a poverty-stricken place” where people had neither flour nor tea nor ammunition. A sack of flour was given to each of the seven households and the sailors contributed old clothing. A year later, Chernofski residents reported that white fishermen from PAF were catching salmon in the stream at Kashega with nets and traps. F. G. Dodge, captain of the cutter *Unalga*, investigated and found a vessel from the cannery anchored off the village. As far as Dodge could discover, however, the only illegal fishing was being done by residents of the village who had constructed 30 box traps across the two streams entering the bay where they caught salmon, primarily red. This was a widespread

16 N.E. Bulshanin to Robert Forbes, Unalaska, Alaska. October 29, 1915. NARA, RG 22.

17 *Record Book 1*, District Court of Alaska, 3rd Division, Book #79574:8, 11, 17.

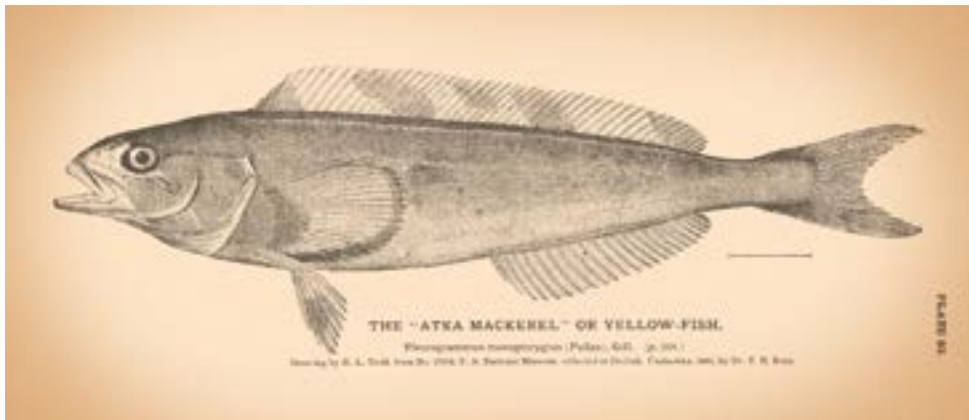
18 Record 1, Dist. Court of Alaska, 3rd division, Book #79574:25, 27.

19 Report of B.L. Reed, June 27, 1916. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1843.

technique that was used also at Nikolski and at Attu. At both Kashega and Attu Dodge told villagers to secure fish only by drift and gill nets in the bay, away from the mouth of any streams. If they fished in the rivers or lakes, it had to be with spears only.²⁰

By 1917 the cannery in Makushin Bay was closing down. Applegate employed 14 Nikolski men that year while other men from the village went to Makushin, expecting to work in the cannery established there. Instead, they were taken to a cannery on the Alaska Peninsula. “At Makushin they were employing as few men as possible,” Applegate reported, “as it was the intention to dismantle the plant if the season again proved a failure, which it did, and they have already taken apart much of the machinery with a view of moving the plant up somewhere in Bristol Bay next year.”²¹

While the cannery at Makushin provided minimal employment for Makushin and Kashega men, even that was not available to men from Biorka. The Union Fish Company of Seattle briefly operated a saltery on Tigalda in 1916, but their labor was all imported. The business was located at the site of an old village, about 200 feet from an old cemetery. Men at the cod station shot young fox during the summer months, seriously jeopardizing the trapping that Akutan men did on the island during the winter months.²² This saltery was operating without a permit, however, and before long it was moved to Nagai Island in the Shumagin Islands where the company’s station had recently burned down.²³ Six Biorka men fished for the Alaska Fishing Company in the summer of 1918 at Wislow, northwest of Unalaska. However, “after they caught 200 barrels they quit because they thought they had enough.”²⁴



The “Atka Mackerel” or yellow fish, *Pleurogrammus monopterygius* (Pallas), Gill. (specimen collected at “Illiuliuk, Unalashka,” 1880 by Dr. T. H. Bean). NOAA.

In November 1916 when Paul Buckley sought permission to establish a cod station on Unalaska Island and a salmon cannery in Pumicestone Bay, he provided a petition from residents of Kashega and Chernofski. “We have had

20 F.G. Dodge, report July 3, 1917. NARA, RG 22, box 24. folder 99: Aleutian Islands Reservation—Misc. Fishing Permits, 1917-1921.

21 Applegate to Commissioner of Fisheries, Oct. 26, 1917. NARA, RG 22, box 24, folder 99.

22 F.G. Dodge, Cruise Report, *Unalga*. May 26, 1916. NARA, RG 22, box 1843.

23 Harry J. Christoffers to Commissioner of Fisheries. July 5, 1916. NARA, RG 22, box 18. Division of Alaska Fisheries, correspondence, reports, and other records. Folder 89.

24 Gust Munson to Commissioner Smith, Nov. 26, 1918. NARA, RG 22, box 24, folder 99.

a hard struggle for years to get the necessities of life,” the petition stated, “and will gladly give permission to anyone to fish in the waters around our villages, if they will give us employment and an opportunity to sell the fish that we catch.”²⁵ Again, the petition was headed by the signature of Alexei Yatchmeneff, “Chief of Unalaska Island Natives.” Buckley was initially denied the salmon cannery but after further lobbying, the salmon cannery was also allowed. H. F. Moore, acting commissioner, wrote that “it is with some misgiving that this permit is granted” as it “may result in drawing too heavily upon the supply of salmon.” However, it is granted “to further the interests of the natives in every way possible” even though the number of permits that have been granted may well mean that “native labor will be inadequate to meet the demand already created.”²⁶ As of February 1917 there were ten active permits for the “Aleutian Islands Reservation” assigned to Buckley, Somerville, Applegate, Goss, Pacific American Fisheries, and the Sockeye Salmon Company.

In August 1918 Buckley wrote that his codfish operation at Akutan had been successful and that he had encouraged others to get into the business of salting cod and salmon. “This year every able bodied native in this section has had all the work they wanted,” he wrote, “—in fact, there has been a scarcity of labor here.”²⁷ In 1918 his company, the Unalaska Atkafish Company, received a permit to establish a saltery at English Bay. He had filed a trade and manufacturing site on the north shore of the bay in September 1916 (with Carl O. Angell).²⁸ Vasilii Shaiasnikov was to be his manager and ten men from Biorka were to do the the cod and salmon fishing for “Atkafish.”

Ownership and operation of cod and salmon plants shifted. The Bering Sea Fisheries Company, out of Seattle, had salteries at Station Bay, Boulder Bay, and Dory Bay, all at the south end of Unalaska Island. Lars Mikkelsen had established these after consultation with Captain Dodge of the *Unalga* and following encouragement from Father Hotovitsky at Unalaska.²⁹ The priest’s interest in economic improvement for his parish would continue for decades after he had moved to King Cove around 1920. The company anticipated opening another plant at Kuliliak Bay, on the Pacific Ocean side of the pass from Kashega, in the spring of 1921.³⁰ Applegate, in a final volley as he sold his Nikolski holdings to A.C. Goss, objected to Mikkelsen’s ventures. The company’s use of local men as fishermen did not succeed and most of its fishermen were Scandinavians. In 1919 it employed

25 Petition, November 19, 1916, to H.C. Kavanaugh and Paul Buckley. Attachment to letter from Paul Buckley to Secretary of the Treasury, January 12, 1917. RG 22, #91.

26 H.F. Moore to E. Lester Jones, April 2, 1917. NARA, RG 22, Entry #91.

27 RG 22, Box 24, Folder 100. Paul Buckley to E.F. Sweet. August 27, 1918. The permit for English Bay was issued June 5, 1918.

28 *Record Book 1*, District Court of Alaska, 3rd Division, Book #79574:35.

29 Smith to Applegate, September 5, 1919. NARA, RG 22, box 24. folder 99: Aleutian Islands Reservation—Misc. Fishing Permits, 1917-1921.

30 Lars Mikkelsen, report to Department of Commerce, January 27, 1921. NARA, RG 22, box 24. folder 99: Aleutian Islands Reservation—Misc. Fishing Permits, 1917-1921.

sixteen Unanga men, but the following year only about five Chernofski men were hired and assigned jobs of unloading freight at Station Bay.³¹



"Oonalashkan Natives Cod-Fishing. An Aleutian Fisherman and Bidarka hooking 'Treesca' in Oolachta Harbor, Oonalashka Island." E. H. Elliott, 1897. NOAA.

With little income from either fox trapping or fishing, men continued to rely on traditional sealing to secure food. Young migrating fur seals continued to be preferred, but hunting them was illegal. Following hearings and inspections at Akutan related to illegal seal hunting, Lieut. Comdr. J. F. Hottel, the commanding officer of the *Haida* wrote, "The natives are a poor lot and the whaling station, from employment at which they derive their main revenue[,] not having been in operation last year, they had a hard time getting through the past winter and it seems safe to presume that their hunting which, according to all accounts, was very limited, was prosecuted mainly for purpose of obtaining food, the skins being used for boat top covering (these natives use skin boats almost exclusively) and was a matter of self preservation."³²

While sea lion skins were the preferred covering for baidarkas, any sea mammal skin could be utilized and consequently, as Hottel noted, hunting seals was a continuing necessity for any village that depended on skin boats. The reliance on skin boats varied from place to place as Stevenson reported in 1923. People at both Attu and Atka employed the vessel while at Nikolski its use continued although people "are not so proficient" in its use and stayed near the island. The kayak was not used at Unalaska, Morzhovoi, or Belkovski.³³ Consequently,

31 Stevenson, Donald H. "Fish" SIA, RU 7176, box 19, folder 8. Fish of Alaska Waters near the Aleutians. 1920.

32 Commanding Officer, *Haida*, to Commander, Bering Sea Patrol Force. Unalaska, Alaska, August 21-22, 1922. RG 26, 611 Box 1851.

33 Stevenson, Donald H. "Extract from Report of Donald H. Stevenson, Reservation and Fur Warden Aleutian Islands Reservation, Unalaska, Alaska. September 10, 1923." RG 22.

its dominance at Akutan in 1922 is noteworthy and suggests its continuation at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega.

Harry J. Christoffers, an agent for the Fish and Wildlife Service stationed at Unalaska, tried to ascertain the amount of illegal fur seal hunting. The skins were sold to men aboard various vessels and occasionally smuggled to British Columbia in barrels aboard codfish schooners. He implicated N.E. Bolshanin, O.K. Quean, and Hugh McGlashan, the trader at Akutan, with Bolshanin as the ringleader. Even Father Hotovitsky was said to have purchased seal skins from local men. Bolshanin used his vessel, the schooner *Lettie*, that he had purchased in the winter of 1915-16 and hired E.L. Larson to operate. Taking the vessel as far as Attu, Larson would stop at various villages to trade. "The amount of trading which can be done, however, is very small as there is a government store and a trader at Atka and two traders at Attu," wrote Christoffers who heard that Larson had returned to Unalaska that winter with "two bales of seal skins on the *Lettie* from Atka, Makushin and other places" that he later disposed of at Akutan.³⁴ He heard that O.K. Quean had purchased about 60 fur seal skins from men at Unalaska and villages to the west during the winters of 1913-1914 and 1914-1915.³⁵ Christoffers was frustrated and recommended various undercover ploys to secure proof needed for prosecution. Seal hunting continued but with little impact on what families earned.

"There is no question but that there is or has been a sort of dry rot or decay of all industries within the Aleutian Islands since the advent of the Americans," wrote Donald H. Stevenson, Reservation and Fur Warden for the region, in 1924. "It is my sincere wish that some permanent industry will be developed in the near future which will give the native residents as well as others...a steady solid means of livelihood as compared to a hand to mouth existence as is now the case."³⁶ Sheep ranching promised to be that "permanent industry."³⁷ Its history is as tangled as the venture was tangential to the economic well being of Chernofski and Kashega.³⁸ In 1915 Paul Buckley, deputy U.S. marshal, made a trip around Unalaska Island on behalf of the Department of Justice. He noticed the excellent grazing land on the south end of the island and in 1917 he applied for a long-term lease for all of Unalaska Island, from Kashega to the end of the island for cattle raising. "There are two villages in this tract of land, one at Kashega and the other at Chernofsky and they have hard work to make a living

34 Harry J. Christoffers to Commissioner of Fisheries. July 15, 1916. NARA, RG 22, box 36, folder 175.

35 Harry J. Christoffers to Commissioner of Fisheries, August 28, 1915. NARA, RG 22, box 36, folder 175, pelagic sealing.

36 Donald H. Stevenson to E.W. Nelson, Chief, Bureau of Biological Survey. Unalaska, January 13, 1924. Smithsonian Institution Archives. Record Unit 7176, US Fish and Wildlife, Field Reports, Report on Islands within the Aleutian Islands Reservation, 1921-1924, box 20, folder 2.

37 A thorough history of sheep ranching in the Aleutians, *Alaska's Wild West*, has been written by Cora Holmes.

38 The community overview of Nikoski prepared for the Aleutians West Coastal Resource Service Area, Vol. II, Resource Inventory and Analysis, August 2006, for example, dates the beginning of organized sheep ranching to 1926 when the Aleutian Livestock Company was said to have built a ranch at Nikoski.

out of the few foxes they catch.” He had the endorsement of Alexei Yatchmeneff and Father Hotovitsky. He was hoping for nominal rental “as it would take some time before we would have an income producing industry.”³⁹

Serious work began with A.L. Macintosh, a Scotsman living in Bend, Oregon, who had been in the sheep business in the Falkland Islands for five years. Suspecting agricultural parallels with the Aleutians, he made a visit to the Chain that confirmed his optimism. He returned and organized a company.⁴⁰ His principal investor and partner was Dr. Andrew C. Smith, president of the Hibernian Savings Bank of Portland, Oregon. Smith and Macintosh formed the Umnak Livestock Company with the intent to do more than harvest wool: they would salt cod and deliver mail. On Sept. 20, 1917, the company received a permit to “engage in preserving cod and salmon at Nikolski.”⁴¹ In 1918 the company was awarded the mail contract from Kodiak to Unalaska and up to the Nushagak region.⁴² Henry Swanson remarked that the first boat they used to deliver mail was the schooner *Eloise*. It was one of “all kinds of funny boats” that salesmen in Seattle had sold “the shepherds.” Swanson noted that “they were good boats but none of them were fit to be a mail boat.” He described the *Eloise* as a “real old sea-going yacht with a big keel.” Men who knew ships called it the *E-louse*.⁴³

Early in the spring of 1918 the Umnak Livestock Company shipped several hundred ewes to Amaknak Island.⁴⁴ These were probably destined for Umnak Island.⁴⁵ However, transportation problems altered the plan. It’s not clear exactly what happened next. Two-hundred twenty were left on Amaknak Island. The remaining 440 were to be divided equally between Umnak Island and Chernofski. The sheep intended for Chernofski did arrive because an inspector visited in November and met the herder in charge (Sam Vaughn). It is not known if those intended for Umnak made it there or not. They may have remained on Amaknak because records suggest there were 500 sheep at the beginning of the 1918-1919 winter. The following months were severe with snow drifting until some of the houses were completely covered. About half the stock died.⁴⁶ Despite this loss, the number of ewes, with lambs, was back at 500 by summer. Half were placed at Chernofski and half at Nikolski.⁴⁷ Although Macintosh was recognized

39 Paul Buckley to William G. McAdoo, January 12, 1917. RG 22, #91.

40 W.R. Sproat to Milton Holmes, February 22, 1952. Copy courtesy of Milton Holmes.

41 H.M. Smith, commissioner of fisheries, to Samuel Applegate, September 5, 1919. NARA, RG 22 # 91.

42 R.C. Knox, Post Office Department, Seattle, to Louis Greene, A.C. Co., San Francisco. Sept. 15, 1918. J.Hugh Jackson Library JL-6.

43 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 60.

44 Guy Allingham was in charge of the sheep. On April 19, 1919, he took out a trade and manufacturing claim a half mile from Chernofski Village. Third Judicial District records, Record Book 79574, page 91.

45 “Report by W.B. Rider to Moore Peterson Co. on Trip to Alaska”, October 1918. SIA, RU 7176, box 4, folder 2.

46 Harris, Arthur J. “Sheep on the Chain,” *Matanuska Valley Record*. September 1952, Vol. II, No. 6:1. The annual report for the teachers at Unalaska, dated June 30, 1919, noted “The winter was the most severe known in the past thirty years. Snow drifted till some of the houses were completely covered.” Agnes Danford, “Annual Report. Unalaska.” NARA, RG 75, Entry #802. File: Unalaska Box 103, 1918-1919.

47 Harris, Arthur J. “Sheep on the Chain.” *Matanuska Valley Record*. September 1952, Vol. II, No. 6:1.

as being “neither an efficient or economical manager,” it was felt that to “displace him entirely from the management would be doing him a decided injustice.”⁴⁸

Soon Smith and Macintosh had a falling out and the Umnak Livestock Company broke into two separate operations. Smith established the Western Pacific Livestock Company headquartered in Portland, Oregon. Macintosh initiated the Aleutian Livestock Company based in Los Angeles. In 1925 the Aleutian Livestock Company decided to establish herds on Umnak Island that would be managed from Chernofski. Three thousand three hundred rambouillet and delaine sheep from Montana left Seattle on the *Oduna* on May 29 and arrived at Nikolski on June 6, 1926.

The Western Pacific Livestock Company had not been as active as the Aleutian Livestock Company. Both firms still had land at Chernofski and this remained a “subject of considerable controversy” as both firms sought to fulfill the terms of their permits.⁴⁹ When the Aleutian Livestock Company was granted temporary use of six square miles at Chernofski, including four square miles regularly used by the Western Pacific Livestock Company, Western Pacific felt this “would cut the heart out of their range.” Aleutian Livestock insisted this land was needed as headquarters for their Umnak operations. Western Pacific eventually transferred its headquarters north to Kashega Village.



Sheep at Kashega,
Alice Moller Collection,
courtesy AB Rankin.

The worldwide influenza rampage struck the Aleutian Islands in May 1919. Between May 23 and June 13, 44 deaths were recorded at Unalaska. Among those who died were former Makushin residents Oustinia Petikoff and Nicolai Lekanoff, Elisha Basaroff from Biorka, and Nicolai Kudrin from Kashega.

48 “Report by W.B. Rider to Moore Peterson Co. on Trip to Alaska”, October 1918. SIA, RU 7176, box 4, folder 2.

49 “Memorandum for Mr. Hedington.” Feb. 24, 1928. NARA, RG 22, Fish and Wildlife Service, Division of Wildlife Refuges, Entry #146, box 1, folder: Aleutian Islands, 1922-29 permits.

The number of deaths at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega is unknown and anecdotal information conflicts with the scant records. In 2004 Nikolai Lekanoff commented on the disastrous result of an epidemic at Makushin that decimated his family. His father's first wife and 10 of their 14 children died. Exactly the same story has been transmitted through the family of Constantine Lekanoff, Nick's older half-brother who helped transport bodies for burial.⁵⁰ Although Andrew Makarin remarked on the high mortality Biorka experienced, no inspection was made of the village until November 1920 when only one death during the previous 12 months was reported.⁵¹ Biorka, lying between Unalaska and Akutan, may very well have seen a number of deaths.

The whaling station at Akutan reported being "considerably hampered by the epidemic of influenza, which was very severe among the Aleutian Island natives, and thus prevented the catch from being even larger."⁵² An inspection of Akutan in late June 1920 reported that during the previous 12 months three men and eleven women had died from influenza (all but three over 50, and most in their 60s or 70s).⁵³

As the epidemic was winding down at Unalaska, the *Lettie* arrived from a trip to Atka and Attu. A.C. Goss reported that "there had been a very severe winter, but no sickness of any of the islands or at any other villages to the westward of Unalaska."⁵⁴ In early July 1919, the *Unalga* made a trip west as no word had come from the villages. On July 6 Kashega and Chernofski reported no sickness during the winter and that all residents were well.⁵⁵ The day before Makushin Village had been found deserted, suggesting people were at their fish camp at the old village site. An inspection of Makushin in early October 1920 reported five deaths from influenza during the preceding 12 months, but this would not have included the period when the epidemic was active at Unalaska and Akutan.⁵⁶ Nick Galaktionoff had specific stories about an epidemic that struck Makushin. People had just started constructing wood frame homes when the illness struck. It was preceded by an unusually large number of dead birds being washed ashore and people were cautioned not to eat them. His account suggests people were at the old Volcano Bay village, probably in preparation for summer fishing. He heard how somebody would be chopping wood on the beach and suddenly fall down ill. Elia Borenin and his mother, Matrona Krukoff, and one other person were the only people not ill. Philip Galaktionoff, Nick was told, hiked from Volcano Bay to Makushin Village and removed wood from the new homes in order to construct coffins. The dead were placed on large grass mats and pulled up to the cemetery. So many died that they were left in their homes for 10 to 15 days before burial. After that, people started to recover. After all the illness at Volcano Bay, people

50 Information from Mike Lekanoff, provided by Frederick Lekanoff, October 12, 2012.

51 Andrew Makarin in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 57.

52 *The Pacific Fisherman* Vol. 17, No. 11, November 1919:62

53 Medical Journal, U.S. C.G. cutter *Algonquin*. RG 26, file 611, box 1847 and box 1849.

54 Commanding Officer, U.S.S. *Unalga*. Report of operations of this vessel during Influenza epidemic. NARA RG 75 General Correspondence. 1919-1920, box 97. Folder: U.S. Coast Guard.

55 "Ship's Log, U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Unalga*, F. G. Dodge, Sr. Captain."

56 RG 26, file 611, box 1847. June 26, 1920 Medical Journal U.S.C.G.C. *Algonquin*.

were afraid to return there and so they caught fish in the river by Makushin Village for the winter.⁵⁷

Nick Lekanoff credited the 1919 epidemic with hastening the end of Chernofski.⁵⁸ Chernofski Village had been a community with 60 residents in 1897. It had dropped to 44, divided among twelve families, in 1910. There were 25 residents in six families in March 1920 and by November the village was down to 20.⁵⁹ Sophie Kudrin was at Chernofski visiting her sister, Lucy, the wife of Alex Gordieff at the time the 1920 census was taken. In 1923 Aman Moore, the treasurer and financial backer for Macintosh's Aleutian Livestock Company, had shipped about \$25,000 worth of general merchandise to the village on the *Oduna*.⁶⁰ He planned on opening a store where everything from children's toys to medicines and fancy goods were to be displayed in eight glass show cases. Donald Stevenson was dumbfounded. "They had everything," he wrote, "except customers."

"The Chernofski people didn't benefit from the codfish salteries near Chernofski," Henry Swanson said.⁶¹ "The sheep ranch that had been established there wasn't doing them any good so far as making a living went," Swanson continued. "There were just so few of them left they figured they might as well move."⁶² Stevenson had commented in 1925 that "one or two of the Chernofski boys have got so they are pretty good men about the sheep...."

"Rex" Sproat, who worked at the Chernofski ranch for three years beginning in 1924, wrote that "there was a native village across the bay, but all had moved to Kashega or Unalaska except two families and they, too, moved while I was there."⁶³ "Chernofski was completely abandoned in 1928," Henry Swanson said.

I happened to come through there with my boat the *Alasco-4*, and the Chernofski people jumped aboard. They were waiting for any boat to come along. They had the church torn down already. It was a real small church, but anything they had there they took to add on to the Kashega church.... Alex Gordaoff was chief there at that time. There were only about a dozen people left counting the children. There was one blind man. Some came here to Unalaska. Alex Gordaoff was one of those.... Some stayed in Kashega, and George Yatchmenoff went to Biorka.⁶⁴

The population of Chernofski had been in flux for years as families, and especially men, shifted residences for employment. Yatchmenoff and his wife

57 Nick Galaktionoff, recording April 2, 1976.

58 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 107.

59 Report of F.L. Washburn, medical officer, *Unalga*. Nov. 21, 1920. NARA. RG 26, 611, box 1847.

60 Moore had been an incorporating partner of the Oregon Portland Cement Company. McCaslin, F.E. "A Brief History of the Oregon Portland Cement Co." *The Ore Bin*. Vol. 27, No. 2, February 1964:27. Moore served as president of the company from 1910 to 1916.

61 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 129.

62 Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 21.

63 W.R. Sproat to Milton Holmes, February 22, 1952.

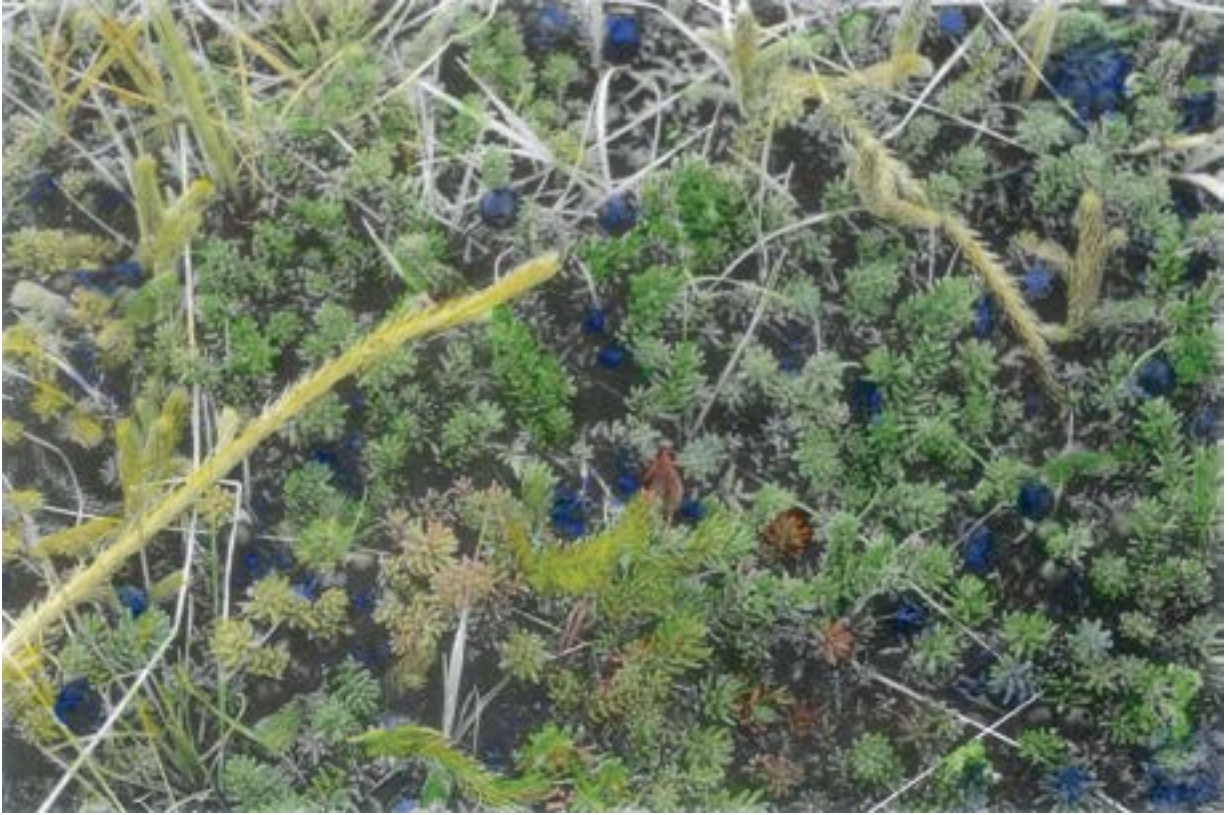
64 Henry Swanson in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 21.

and daughter had been living in Kashega at the time of the 1920 census and so it was natural that he should return there. Eventually, however, he and his family moved to Biorka. Alex Gordieff with his wife had been at Unalaska in 1920, but after Chernofski dissolved he seems to have divided his time between Unalaska and Kashega. Dorofey Kastromitin appears to have settled permanently in Kashega.



Dorofey Kastromitin
and his wife.
Photograph courtesy
Ray Kranich.

Although economic ties among villages on the west end of Unalaska Island had effectively been severed with the termination of sea otter hunting, the abandonment of Chernofski signaled the final dissolution of the mutual dependency that had lasted for generations. From now on, Makushin and Kashega—like Biorka—would survive as separate entities. Their stories, in effect, became separate stories.



Moss berries. Photograph by Ray Hudson. Watercolor tint by Mary C. Broderick.

Chapter 10 Kashega



While economic ties among villages dissipated, deep family relationships endured. Sophie Pletnikoff's family was not unusual in the complexity of relationships extending across several villages. Her mother, Olga Shapsnikoff, had been born at Unalaska around 1873 and had moved to Chernofski following her marriage to Joseph Borenin, a sea otter hunter from that village. By 1900 they had two daughters, Feckla and Okalena, and a son, Michael. Joseph was absent from his family for months while hunting sea otters around Sanak.¹ A decade later, Feckla was seventeen or eighteen and married to Timothy Talanoff. Michael had apparently died (he had been only two in 1900) and his place had been taken by three-year old Vasili, who would live to adulthood. In addition to Okalena, there were now three other girls: Oleta, Lucy, and Sophia, who had been born September 14, 1907. While she was still an infant, the family moved to Kashega. Sophie speculated that they left Chernofski because her mother did not get along with her brothers-in-law but the reasons were probably as much economic as social.

In the spring of 1914, Joseph and his son Vasili were gathering wood on the other side of the village creek when a man saw the boy standing by himself. It had rained and the stream was swollen with water.

"Where's your daddy?" the man asked.

"My daddy's chopping wood," Vasili replied. "He's sleeping down there, down the beach."

"Aye-ya-ya!" Sophie said, remembering that day.² Olga, George Borenin, John and Nikefor Denisoff ran to where Joseph had collapsed on the beach and died.³ Not long afterwards, in April, Olga gave birth to her last child, a girl whom she named Dora. She and her children were taken by baidarka to Makushin where her

1 Hudson, ed., *Unuguluḡ Tunusangin*, 237.

2 Hudson, ed., *Unuguluḡ Tunusangin*, 226-227.

3 Dora Kudrin, interview with Ray Hudson, December 8, 1975.

brother Elia Shapsnikoff was chief. Sophie remembered seeing water through the skin covering.⁴



The U.S. Revenue cutter Manning at Dutch Harbor, 1905, ASL-P79-019, U.S. Revenue Cutter Service Photograph Collection.

On August 15, 1915, the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Manning* visited Makushin and found three frame houses and six barabaras for the 44 people (27 adults and 17 children). It is likely Elia Shapsnikoff lived in one of the frame houses, since he was chief and had moved to the village from Unalaska. The only death the previous year had been an infant. “The houses and barabaras are very dirty, damp and foul smelling,” wrote the ship’s assistant surgeon. “The water supply is obtained from a large rapid running mountain stream near the village. As in the other villages there are no privies and there is much evidence of soil pollution by feces.”⁵

Olga and her children were divided among different homes. They spent time at the old village at Volcano Bay where Sophie recalled the barabaras were windowless and depended on openings in the roof for light. These were closed from the outside at night.⁶ Sophie again speculated that her mother and her

4 Pletnikoff, Sophie, “A Life in Kashaga,” Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 37.

5 Wm. C. Witte, Ass’t Surgeon, to F.G. Dodge. Report of medical work done on Alaskan cruise, July, August and September, 1915. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1841.

6 Hudson, ed., *Unuguluḡ Tunusangin*, 238.

aunt were not compatible and after a few months, perhaps one winter, they returned to Kashega. They were there by the summer of 1916 because in June the medical officers of the Coast Guard Cutter *McCulloch* treated Sophie for favus, that persistent disease of the scalp.⁷ By this time, Sophie's older sister Feckla had been widowed and she had married the widower Ivan A. Denisoff. Their daughter Xenia was born in 1914. Alice, as Xenia was known, and her two aunts, Sophie and Dora, grew up like sisters.⁸

The chief of Kashega, as noted earlier, was probably Afanasii Denisoff. Sophie indicated that at one time John Kudrin had been both chief and a reader in the church.⁹ This may have been Ivan Ivanovich Kudrin (John J. Kudrin) although she identified this chief as Cornelius Kudrin's father—an entirely different man, Elish Ivanovich Kudrin.

Olga Borenin did not remarry but supported her children as best she could. They lived in one of the poorer barabaras. The floor was dirt, covered with grass that was renewed on special occasions, such as church holidays. Clothes were sewed from recycled flour sacks; and shoes, when worn, were made from traditional sea lion throats and flippers. When Sophie was old enough, her mother “loaned” her to elderly residents who had no extended family members and who needed help with meals and daily chores. Such an arrangement was neither unusual nor unkind even though a school teacher at Unalaska decried the practice as slavery. During periods when people, especially the elderly, had limited resources, this arrangement provided needed assistance while reducing the economic burden on large families. For Sophie, living with elders gave her opportunities to observe and learn a variety of traditional skills, from gut sewing to basket weaving, as she attempted to duplicate what she saw being done. Trial and error was common as when she and a friend first decided to weave baskets and they naively pulled fresh stalks of grass from the ground and set to work.



A barabara at Kashega, circa 1930, Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.s

Kashega women were excellent weavers. Basket collectors often used the term *Attu* when describing any Aleut weaving because Attu baskets were considered the rarest and finest. Kashega weaving earned similar praise as when, in 1900,

7 Report of B.L. Reed, Capt. *McCulloch*, June 27, 1916. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1843.

8 Mary Diakanoff, e-mail to Ray Hudson, July 9, 2012.

9 Hudson, ed., *Unuguluḡ Tunusangin*, 233.

a newspaper advertised the “largest collection in [the] Northwest [of] Aleutian and Kashega Island” baskets.¹⁰ The NAC Company agent recorded receiving baskets from the village in 1904 and 1906. (He noted baskets from Makushin in 1904, but never any from Biorka.) Alexandra Reinken, wife of Adolph Reinken and a member of the Kudrin family, was noted for her work.¹¹ Agraфина Borenin Sovoroff, also from Kashega, is shown in a photograph taken in 1909 by Dina Brodskaya Iokhel’son wearing an exquisitely woven grass cape.¹² Sophie’s mother, Olga Borenin, was a master weaver and there is a superb fish basket by her in the Oakland Museum of California.¹³ She preferred the long white grass from a location at Chernofski.¹⁴ She also served as a midwife for the village.

Men fished the stream at Kashega on a regular basis even when regulations prohibited it. If the Coast Guard were sighted entering the bay, any illegal gear was hidden in the high grass. Sophie remarked that even if officials suspected illegal fishing, they rarely took steps to stop it.¹⁵ She implied that care of the stream was a matter of both religious and secular concern. It was kept productive both by continuous efforts to keep it physically clean and by the church reader occasionally sprinkling it with holy water and incense.¹⁶ This blending of secular and religious matters was reflected throughout village life. The key positions of village chief and church reader were frequently held by the same person. The institution of godparents was as important to the daily functioning of the village as that parents, aunts and uncles. During menstruation women refrained from entering the church and stayed away from streams and the sea.

Pink, red, and silver salmon were processed into smoked and dried fish. Prior to being smoked, salmon were soaked in brine overnight. The salinity was gauged by adding salt until a potato floated. In the absence of a potato, at times a real delicacy, a fish head was used. If weather permitted, the fish were hung outside for two or three days before being placed in the smoke house where only cottonwood was burned. For salted fish, the salmon were cleaned and covered with dry salt. Once preserved, they could be stored and prior to being used they were soaked in fresh water overnight. Dry fish were prepared in much the same way: cleaned, hung skin-side out overnight, and then turned over exposing the meaty side. Dried fish kept longer than salted fish and could be used throughout the winter.¹⁷ Vigilance was needed to keep flies from laying eggs on the fish. People were not lazy in Kashega, Sophie remarked, and they would sit by their sheds or warehouses where the fish were drying in order to keep them as clean as

10 The November 25, 1900, *The Sunday Oregonian* (Portland) carried an advertisement for Mrs. Frohman’s Indian Basket Rooms.

11 Examples may be seen in the collection of the Hood Museum, Dartmouth College.

12 Peter the Great Museum, *Treasures of the Kunstkamera*, 86.

13 Catalog number H16.831.

14 Hudson, ed., *Unuguluḡ Tunusangin*, 239.

15 Pletnikoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 71.

16 Pletnikoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 69.

17 Tape recording of Sophia Pletnikoff and Nick Galaktionoff with Platonida Gromoff, January/February 1978. Ray Hudson’s collection.

possible. Women wove grass mats to protect the fish when it rained. Once ready, fish were stored in barrels and in prepared sea lion stomachs.

On one occasion, Sophie and her brother decided to make home brew. Her mother wasn't at home and so they concocted a barrel and, while the alcohol was still hot, they poured it into a glass bottle. It burst sending home brew all over the ceiling.¹⁸

With no father and only one brother, Sophie and her sisters helped with subsistence chores. They gathered wood and grass. Her sister Lucy was an excellent shot with a rifle.¹⁹ Sophie fished barefooted in the river. Because of inadequate clothing, she was frequently cold and suffered for rest of her life from the results. When she was 16 she began to cough blood, a symptom of tuberculosis. She was first treated with finely chopped sea lion liver mixed with seal or cod liver oil.²⁰ Fortunately, she was then sent to Anchorage where she underwent surgery. She returned to Kashega, and in late April or early May 1926 she and Tecusa Kudrin, the daughter of John and Ephemias, traveled to Unalaska on the *Umnak Native*. Both girls were seventeen and on May 5 both were married, Tecusa to Theofan Petukoff of Unalaska and Sophie to Alexei Kudrin of Kashega. He was thirty-two, and because of Sophie's age, permission for the marriage was given by her sister Lucy, now married to Alex Gordieff and living at Unalaska. Alex and Sophie Kudrin returned to Kashega. In March, however, as Sophie neared the birth of her first child, Alex died of tuberculosis.²¹ He had gone to get wood and had taken Vasilii Borenin, Sophie's brother, to man the oars in the dory. What Vasilii had experienced with his own father in 1914 was now repeated with his brother-in-law.



Basket woven by Alexandra Kudrin Reinken, Hood Museum, Dartmouth. 46.17.9384.

“And my dad was chopping wood,” Eva Tcheripanoff said. “It was nice day, sunshine. All of a sudden, blood coming out. And he couldn't stand up no more so he was down on the rocks and my uncle come up to him, sort of

18 John Tcheripanoff, student paper, “What Human Life was Like in Kashega,” 1971, author's collection.

19 George Gordaoff, interview with Rachel Mason, November 5, 2008.

20 Hudson, ed., *Unuguluḥ Tunusangin*, 227.

21 There is confusion about this event. Both Sophie and Eva repeated the story of Eva's birth after the death of her father; genealogical information places Alexei's death in 1928.

walk him down to the dory and took him home. And everybody comes to the bank and brought him home. He died that night.”²²

Before dying, he asked Sophie to name their child after him if it were a boy. The child, however, was a girl and was named Eva.

Death altered living conditions as much as life in communities where women were dependent on men for shelter and food. Sophie and her daughter settled into her brother Vasili's home, where their youngest sister Dora was also living. Sophie's eldest sister, Feckla, had died some years earlier, leaving Ivan Denisoff a widower once again with Alice, his young daughter. Olga, Sophie's mother, had moved into her son-in-law's home to help. By the time of the 1930 census, the home had only Ivan, now 59, and Olga, slightly younger at 55. On January 18, 1930, at seventeen, Alice Denisoff followed her Aunt Sophie into an early marriage. She had met Charles Moller, a Norwegian fisherman who was working for Harry Jacobson at his codfish saltery either at Raven or Kuliliak Bay on the south side of Unalaska Island.²³ John (Ivan) Denisoff gave permission for the marriage.

Jacobson had been drawn to Kashega as the village economy improved. He was born in Tromsø, Norway, in 1870. After working in the mines at Spitsbergen (where he lost his teeth to scurvy), he immigrated to the United States in 1905, gradually making his way to Alaska. (For as long as she lived, his mother sent him a piece of silver each year for Christmas.²⁴) By 1919 he was working at the whaling plant at Akutan. Although he was not at Kashega when the 1920 census count was made, he may have arrived soon after. Sophie indicated that Jacobson opened his store when she was about seventeen. Recalling the village before his arrival, she said, “They got hard times...no tea, no flour. No store...no nothing. It's after that, about I'm seventeen years old, that old man Mr. Jacobson make a store and help Kashega's people.”²⁵

Kashega was in the news in 1928 when the Stoll-McCracken Siberian Arctic Expedition of the American Museum of Natural History arrived to look for prehistoric burials. While visiting villages on the Alaska Peninsula in 1916-1917, Harold McCracken had heard tales of mummies buried in the vicinity of Kashega. His unnamed source, “an old Aleut,” pointed him towards an islet off Kashega. The expedition arrived at the village on the *Effie M. Morrissey* in June 1928, and saw “the earthy dome-shaped tops of their barrabaras.” Two men rowed a dory out and went aboard. McCracken found them “uninteresting people.” He was a writer whose nonfiction works are uncomfortably similar in style and tone to his novels. His depiction of Kashega is straight out of the 19th century with Unanga described as little more than paupers dressed in “wrinkled, faded and frayed” “white man's

22 Tcheripanoff, in *The Beginning of Memory*, 50-51.

23 Mary Diakanoff, e-mail to Ray Hudson July 11, 2012.

24 Swanson in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 50-51.

25 Hudson, ed., *Unugulux Tunusangin*, 223-224.

clothing” while McCracken strode about the landscape as one of its heroes. He apparently met Harry Jacobson. “His hair was gray,” he wrote. “That is, it would have been gray or possibly even white if it had been clean. He appeared even dirtier and less healthy than the natives around him.”²⁶ McCracken secured the assistance of the chief and “his son” to take them to Fortress Rock, not far down the coast. These two men, according to McCracken, “were just going along for a ride and being paid probably more money than they had earned in several months.”²⁷ The chief, although unnamed, was no doubt John Yatchmenoff (the first) and “his son” was probably a nephew or other young man from the village because Yatchmenoff had no children of his own and McCracken was never too worried about facts. A young graduate student from Yale, Edward Moffat Weyer, Jr., was on the expedition and wrote an accurate account of what they found.²⁸ In addition to detailing the wooden sarcophagus containing four mummy bundles, he referred to “local traditions” among which was that the larger side of Fortress Rock had been inhabited at one time and that the twenty-five foot cleft separating it from the smaller side of the islet had been spanned “by a drawbridge.” The presence of house pits along with extensive grave deposits under an overhanging cliff confirmed the habitation of the island. Subsequent dispatches and articles by McCracken compared their finds to those surrounding King Tut “in antiquity if not in splendor” and members of the expedition were photographed displaying a box with a head from one of the burials.²⁹



The chapel at Kashega (post World War II), Banks photo: uac-hmc-0068-series16-f7-10 Bank.

- 26 McCracken, *God's Frozen Children*, 244.
27 McCracken, *Roughnecks and Gentlemen*, 363-364.
28 Weyer, “An Aleutian Burial,” 225-238.
29 *The Carp Review*, Montreal, November 1, 1928:4.

Henry Swanson visited Fortress Rock not long after McCracken had left and he found “a big mess there where they had dug the mummies out and left a lot of trash laying around.” Henry had learned about the burials from Kashega people and had even tried beating the Siberian Expedition to the island, but, finding the weather such that he couldn’t land he left his men at Kashega and went about other business. “Anyway,” Henry said, continuing his story

McCracken wrote a book and mentioned me, but not by name. He called me this “well-equipped” outfit that was up here ahead of him who were ignorant or dumb and who didn’t get the mummies. In his book McCracken called O.K. Quean a “man who missed too many boats.” That was an expression used about a person who went crazy from being in Alaska too long. “He missed too many boats” going back out. That’s the way he described old man Quean. Oh, Quean was mad about that!³⁰

Henry was told that the cliff head on Fortress Rock had sloughed off, covering the mouth of a cave that held even more burials. “So those mummies are still there,” he said, “that is, if there are any mummies in that cave.”

A gradually improving economy meant people had money for purchases at Jacobson’s store. A new church was erected in the summer of 1930.³¹ Two years later, it was “remodeled” and Christmas was celebrated with a visit from Father Kochergin.³² Frame houses gradually replaced the barabaras that had been exclusively used in 1920. By 1930 barabaras were employed only for storage or converted into smoke houses for fish. Alice Moller’s daughter, Mary Diakanoff, recalled that her grandfather, John Denisoff, had a barabara in front of his home where he smoked his fish. It had five steps leading down into it. He also had a wood-frame warehouse that he kept fastidiously clean. Her grandfather was, according to Mary, the fussiest person she ever knew when it came to neatness. Children were not allowed inside his warehouse for fear that they would mess things up. Once she and Polly Kudrin were playing outside and saw him inside. “We walked in,” she said, “and he just stared hard at us until we left.”³³

Perhaps the clearest indication of a strong economy was the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ decision to establish a school in the village. A building was completed by August 1927. The largest structure in the village, it had ten foot ceilings and held a large classroom (23 x 30 feet), along with a teacherage

30 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 132-133.

31 Southwestern District News Bulletin, Vol. I, No. 10, October 1930:3. NARA, RG 75. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Alaska Division. General Correspondence, 1931-1932. Box 215. Folder: Juneau Office, monthly news bulletins. In 1930 Henderson had students draw pictures “of the new church.”

32 Southwestern District News Bulletin, Vol. III, No. 2, February 1932:7. NARA, RG 75. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Alaska Division. General Correspondence, 1931-1932. Box 215. Folder: Juneau Office, monthly news bulletins. Gregory Kochergin served Nikolski from 1936-39. Prior to that, he may have served Unalaska.

33 Mary Diakanoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 22, 2012.

consisting of a living room, kitchen, and store room. In addition there were two outhouses and a fuel shed. According to one account, the school was founded by Dr. Andrew Smith, a principal investor in the sheep ranching business. Smith maintained an interest in the school and would occasionally send gifts to the children at Christmas.³⁴ James and Carrye Henderson arrived as teachers in 1929. Their immediate supervisor was George Gardner, superintendent for the Southwestern District, with his office at Unalaska. The new teachers undertook various improvements to the school. They added shelves, book cases, kitchen and library tables. The outhouses were relocated and braced to withstand the winds. A water pump was installed in the kitchen. A flag pole was erected, and all the buildings were painted. The school garden produced radishes, turnips, carrots and lettuce. In 1931 the Hendersons added a kitchen sink and constructed a 10 x 16 shop onto the building. In June 1932 they built a “canoe” for the lake.



James and Carrye Henderson and students in front of the school. Photograph courtesy Ray Kranich.

James Henderson’s reports for 1931 and 1932 describe an industrious community. “The natives fish in summer for the canneries and trap for red fox in winter on this and neighboring islands,” he wrote in 1931.

A few go to the Pribilofs in the summer to work as laborers. There are no reindeer. Some of the native men have worked for short times as shearers of sheep for the sheep company here. The women weave and sell a few baskets. There are no other industries but the economic condition has been fairly good to date. There is no wood here and wood has to be boated in from several miles distance. There is one local store and a livestock company doing business here.

34 Arletta Carter. Narrative Report for FY ending June 30, 1933. NARA, RG 75. Records of the Alaska Division. Reports and Statistical Records. Annual School Reports, 1933-37.

In the summer of 1931, the school along with its fence and gate received another fresh coat of green paint. The red roof was repainted and a school bell was installed. “The men who were fishing here for red salmon have finished with that fish,” Henderson wrote on July 31. “They’ll attend to the humpys next and the silvers after that.” On November 16 he wrote, “The health of the community is very good. The native men are preparing to trap, of course, most



of them on this island.” In January 1932, the district bulletin reported Kashega had enjoyed a Christmas play. “There is no sickness in the village of an acute nature,” wrote Henderson, “and the weather for the past few days has been extremely beautiful with the thermometer below freezing but the days are calm and sunny and the night skys full of stars and a waning moon. The hills are covered with snow; the lakes with ice.... The men have been very lucky with their trapping for the most part and are now coming home for their church festivities.”

Kashega Lake with the school. National Archives and Record Administration, Pacific Alaska Region.

Beginning in 1930, Unalaska superintendent George Gardner and his wife, Victoria, published the *Southwestern District News Bulletin*. Issues included news from villages, including Kashega, and letters written by students.³⁵ These letters are typical of beginning writers and flit from subject to subject without rhyme or reason as this sample from Martha Denisoff shows.

We have rainy weather at Kashega. We are all right at Kashega. We are always well at Kashega. Yesterday we have nice weather but today we have windy and rainy weather. We are healthy at Kashega. What kind of weather do you have at Unalaska. In the morning after reading we have spelling and arithmetic. After recess we have talking English we have forests. It is good thing to learn about forests more and more.... We have no trees at Kashega.... George Washington was born in 1732.³⁶

These student letters reveal few details about the community. There were twelve students in the school and eleven houses in the village. Children looked forward to their fathers working in the Pribilof Islands during the summer. Martha Denisoff wrote that her grandmother was going on a picnic and that there were a lot of blackberries (i.e., moss berries, *Empetrum nigrum*). She also commented that her grandfather, Nikifor Denisoff, was “like Mr. Henderson and Mrs. Henderson.” Exactly what that meant is, of course, a mystery. Another student, Sophie’s youngest sister Dora, commented in October 1931 that “Kashega is a cleanest village in Alaska. We keep Kashega clean all the time....All the Kashega children have gardens. Our gardens are round like a circle.... Perhaps, June 15th

35 NARA, RG 75. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Alaska Division. General Correspondence, 1931-1932. Box 215. Folder: Juneau Office, monthly news bulletins.

36 Southwestern District News Bulletin. February 1932.

will be soon enough to plant turnips, lettuce, carrots and radishes....”³⁷ The absence of trees didn’t prevent Mike Kudrin from winning the state’s forestry essay in 1931.

In his final report, for the 1931-1932 school year, Henderson wrote that four men had worked on St. Paul Island in 1931 but that, because the cannery ship in Makushin Bay did not operate in 1932, seven men went to the Pribilof Islands while “the others are staying at home and putting up salmon and drying them.” He commented that red fox trapping had been good that winter, but the price had been low, bringing only between \$8 and \$8.50 per skin at Jacobson’s store and the one in Unalaska. “The women weave and sell a few baskets but not many and are doing less and less of that sort of thing,” he wrote, “apparently as there is no profit now in baskets.” He concluded his report on a positive note: “There is [not] and hasn’t been any destitution in this village; all families are self supporting and their economic condition has been comparatively good.”



The ruins of Kashega village, September 2, 2010. Photograph by Roberta Gordaoff.

John Yatchmenoff, the village chief, died October 3, 1932, of pulmonary tuberculosis. Funeral services were held in the Chapel of the Transfiguration the following day and he was buried in the cemetery at the east end of the village.³⁸ He was 57. He and his wife, Laressa, had been married 36 years. They had no children of their own, but they had raised Parasovia Kalimof from Chernofski. Parasovia had married in 1915 and, apparently childless, had died before 1920. The chief’s wife was Dora Borenin’s godmother. “Boy! [she was] mean to me!” Dora said, remembering how strict Laressa Yatchmenoff had been when teaching her to read Russian. “Holy! If I didn’t know that one word, she used to let me kneel down until I said that word. Ai-yai-yai! Boy! So I used to read Russian.... I used to read in the Good Friday on the floor. You know, Easter time, ... in the middle of the floor.”³⁹ That is, she would stand at the front of the church and read from the Bible. When Dora’s sister Sophie played cards with Laressa, an argument invariably ensued with the loser accusing the other of cheating. It would take some time before they would start a new game.⁴⁰ In 1932, with her husband dead and no income of her own, Laressa moved to Unalaska where she became, for all practical purposes, homeless. She lived with whatever family would take her in and carried her worldly possessions in the two large pockets of a navy blue sweater.⁴¹ She returned to Kashega, where in 1942 she would be swept up into World War II. She would die less than a year into the evacuation.

37 Southwestern District News Bulletin. December 1931.

38 Murray, Marti. *Mini-biographies*. “Kashega Notes” from *Seward Gateway*, November 12, 1932.

39 Dora Kudrin, interview with Ray Hudson, December 8, 1975.

40 John Tcheripanoff, student paper, “What Human Life was Like in Kashega,” 1971.

41 Mary Diakanoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 22, 2012.

A group at Kashega in the 1930s.

1. Cornelius Kudrin
2. Carl Møller
3. Harry Jacobson.
4. Cornelius Kudrin's nieces Polly and Vassa Kudrin (left to right)
5. Carl Moller's daughter Mary

Photo courtesy Mary Diakanoff.



Kashega Households in 1930 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1930)

Arthur Gillingham, age 59 (head of household, sheep rancher)
Charles Dillon, age 34 (employee of Arthur Gillingham)

Willie Borenin, age 24 (head of household)
Doria Borenin, age 15 (sister of Willie Borenin)
Sophie Kudrin, age 22 (sister of Willie Borenin)
Eva Kudrin, age 2 (niece of Willie Borenin)
Willy Yitchmenoff [Yatchmenoff], age 6 (godson of Willie Borenin)

George Borenin, age 33 (head of household)
Ulita [Oleta] Borenin, age 27 (wife of George Borenin)
Sergie Borenin, age 12 (nephew of George Borenin)
Peter Yitchmenoff [Yatchmenoff], age 25 (boarder of George Borenin)

John Denisoff, age 59 (head of household)
Olga Borenin, age 55 (servant of John Denisoff)

Cornelius Kudrin, age 33 (head of Household)
Mike I Kudrin, age 25 (brother of Cornelius Kudrin)
George Yitchmenoff [Yatchmenoff], age 35 (Boarder of Cornelius Kudrin)

John Yitchmenoff [Yatchmenoff], age 58 (head of household)
Larisa Yitchmenoff [Yatchmenoff], age 49 (wife of John I. Yatchmenoff)
Eva Yitchmenoff [Yatchmenoff], age 14 (niece of John I. Yatchmenoff)

Nikifor Denisoff, age 68 (head of household)
Fickla [Feckla] Denisoff, age 45 (wife of Nikifor Denisoff)
Jacob Denisoff, age 34 (son of Nikifor Denisoff)
Martha Denisoff, age 12 (granddaughter of Nikifor Denisoff)
Gabriel Denisoff, age 22 (grandson of Nikifor Denisoff)

Kashega Households in 1930, continued (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1930)

Ephemia Kudrin, age 44 (head of household)

Peter Kudrin, age 19 (son of Ephemia Kudrin)

Mike Kudrin II, age 16 (son of Ephemia Kudrin)

Olga Kudrin, age 13 (daughter of Ephemia Kudrin)

Sergie Kudrin, age 10 (son of Ephemia Kudrin)

George Kudrin, age 5 (son of Ephemia Kudrin)

Dorofey Kastrometan [Kastromitin], age 32 (head of household)

Malina Kastrometan [Kastromitin], age 30 (wife of Dorofey Kastromitin)

Demitri Kastrometan [Kastromitin], age 7 months (son of Dorofey and Malina Kastromitin)

Charles Miller [Moller] age 40 (head of household)

Oxenia Miller, age 17 (wife of Charles Moller)

Harry Jacobsen, age 59 (Head of household, store manager from Norway)

Boyse J. [James] Henderson, age 37 (Head of household, teacher)

Carrie Henderson, age 30 (wife of James Henderson, teacher)



The sandy beach at Makushin Village. Photograph by Frederick Lekanoff.

Chapter 11 Makushin



As chief of Makushin, Elia Shapsnikoff was, as far as is known, an effective community leader for the decade beginning around 1910. The economy was based on “hunting, fishing, and basket making,” as he told Captain Joyhnes of the U.S. Revenue cutter *Tahoma* in August 1911. “There being,” Joyhnes wrote, “I am informed by their chief, an abundance of fish and ducks in the bay, and some ptarmigan and a few foxes in the surrounding mountains. The men occasionally obtain a few days’ employment in Unalaska, with which place they have communication by trail, and there dispose of their skins at a ruinous rate of trade with the Alaska Commercial Company, the most inimical factor in this country to the natives.”¹ The captain found people suffered from “favus, trachoma pediculosis, pulmonary tuberculosis and kindred complaints” which the ship’s physician attributed to “the poor ventilation of their dwellings” along with poor personal hygiene.

When the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Manning* visited in August 1915, William C. Witte described the barabaras.

These Barabaras consist of two rooms about six feet square and about six feet high. One room is used as sleeping, eating and living room and usually has wooden floors and one window which cannot be opened. In this room they have a bed, a table and several boxes or chairs. The air is foul, damp and has a musty odor. The other room has dirt floor, dirt walls and in one end is dug an open fire place in which the family cooking is done. This room is also used as storehouse for dried fish. The entrance to the Barabara is through the latter room.²

1 Captain Foley to the Secretary of the Treasury, August 10, 1911 and September 16, 1911. NARA. RG 26, file 611, box 1835.

2 Wm. C. Witte, Ass’t Surgeon, to F.G. Dodge. Report of medical work done on Alaskan cruise, July, August and September, 1915. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1841.

The short-lived Pacific American Fisheries salmon cannery in Makushin Bay had no lasting impact on the village. After operating about a year, the company shut down, removed its machinery, and left the buildings in care of a watchman. In 1919, when Henry Swanson visited the plant, Jack North held that position. “He was a funny old guy,” Henry said. “We used to go in there and visit him, and he was happy when somebody came to visit him. But one day only. Next day—if you stayed to visit two days—he was crabby and trying to get rid of you.”³

The run of red salmon in 1920 was unusually heavy and the watchman felt the company could have made a profit had it remained open. Villagers at Makushin, in addition to what they prepared for their own use, salted about 100 barrels for sale that year.⁴ PAF kept a watchman at Cannery Point until the last watchman, Charlie Rose, was shot to death in September 1926 and his body taken to Makushin Village for burial. The murder was never solved.⁵ International Packing Company leased or bought the property and used it to store their gear and boats. They stationed their own watchmen at the site. John Peters, a German immigrant to the Aleutians, held the position for many years. He died in 1937, “one of Unalaska’s oldest most respected citizens,” the same year that another watchman A.A. Mattox, after eight years in Unalaska and Makushin, harvested the last of his garden at Cannery Point, packed up his belongings and his chickens and took the S.S. *Starr* to Seward.⁶

Nick Galaktionoff’s account of his childhood provides a clue as to when wooden houses were introduced. Not long after his birth in 1925, his father, Akenfa (sometimes called Akim) built a house. The lumber may have come from the cannery site and been hauled to the village by baidarka and dory. The family had been living with Akenfa’s mother, Marva Borenin. (After Akenfa’s father had died, Marva had married John Borenin.) “So then my mom and dad was ready to go,” Nick recalled in an interview with Moses Dirks. “I had an older sister named Malaanyaa [Molly]. They went out and pack things over. And me, I was left with my grandmother. So my grandmother grew me up all the way.” Although she told Nick who his mother and father were, he grew up thinking of her as his mother. “But I never called him my dad,” Nick said. “I always call him Ludang, ‘my oldest.’” Because Akenfa referred to his wife as *Ayagang*, Nick grew up using the same word, “my wife,” when he spoke about his mother.⁷

Elia Shapsnikoff moved to Unalaska in the early or mid-1920s—his name appears in minutes of the St. Pantelaimon Brotherhood from that time onward. Nick Lekanoff remarked that Elia went to Unalaska to find work and also so his

3 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 129.

4 Stevenson, Donald H. “Fish” SIA, RU 7176, box 19, folder 8. Fish of Alaska Waters near the Aleutians. 1920.

5 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 105.

6 *Seward Gateway*, June 1 and October 16, 1937.

7 Nick Galaktionoff, interview with Moses Dirks, November 23, 1999. Alaska Native Knowledge Network. *Sharing Our Pathways: A Newsletter of the Alaska Rural Systemic Initiative*, Volume 5, Issue 1, January/February 2000.

children could attend school.⁸ When Shapsnikoff died October 28, 1935, Chief Alexei Yatchmeneff provided information for the death certificate, and noted, “He served as chief at Makushin about ten years.”⁹ Among his survivors was his son Sergie, who had been born and raised at Makushin.

Close ties continued between Makushin and Kashega. Makushin folks traded at Jacobson’s small store, and Kashega people used Makushin as a resting stop when traveling by baidarka into Makushin Bay to make the trek across to Unalaska.¹⁰ When together, people played *kakana*, a gambling game. The villages may also have traded berries because, while there were blueberries at Makushin, there were none at Kashega.¹¹

The Norwegian John Peter Halberg Olsen arrived at Unalaska sometime prior to April 1920. That month the U.S. census enumerator recorded that he had immigrated to the U.S. in 1898. He may have first gone to Adelaide, Australia and then to Astoria, Oregon, after which he settled in Nome from 1901 to 1906.¹² By 1920 he was definitely at Unalaska. He was thirty-nine and single. Nine months later, on New Year’s Day 1921, he married Tatiana Golodoff from Chernofski. They had no children of their own, but in 1922 they adopted Annie Sokolnikoff whose parents had died in the 1919 flu pandemic. Although records show that three years later they adopted Annie’s brother Willie, he was in fact raised by Afenogin Ermeloff of Nikolski. By 1930, Olsen had bought or had built a home at Unalaska. By this time, he had also established relations with Makushin Village and had probably started his blue fox business on an islet in Anderson Bay. He and Tatiana adopted John Borenin who was born at Unalaska around 1926 but whose parents, Matfey and Natalia Borenin, lived at Makushin with several of their other children. Frank Galaktionoff, also with Makushin roots, was a boarder in the Olsen’s Unalaska home. According to Henry Swanson, when Olsen began raising blue fox on what became known as Peter Island, he built a small house. “He built quite a nice house there, too,” Swanson said. “He had dug a well there even. ’Course he had a lot of slaves there to dig it—the Makushin people.”¹³

Swanson’s comment reflects the notoriety that eventually enveloped Olsen. After the islet had been stocked with fox, the story was that one winter Anderson Bay froze over and all his fox walked away. He tore down his cabin and reassembled it in the village. Initially, the residents were pleased that he was there.¹⁴ Olsen is generally credited with transforming the appearance of the village. Wooden cottages were built along a straight wide pathway that ran from the creek to the Olsen’s larger home that locals dubbed the “Olsen Hotel.” He had a small

8 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 106.

9 Third Judicial District, Record of Deaths, Book 3, February 1, 1935-August 29, 1944.s

10 Nick Galaktionoff, recorded March 31, 1976.

11 Nick Galaktionoff, recorded April 2, 1976.

12 Information from Pat Roppel and Rachel Mason, e-mail September 1, 2012.

13 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 76.

14 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 99.

store attached to the dwelling. He constructed a barn for use with his sheep raising efforts. He purchased a boat from the International Packing Company at Cannery Point and named it the *Katie-O*, after his wife.¹⁵ It was a 35-foot double-ender, small, but large enough to carry a few people to Unalaska.¹⁶ The water in front of Makushin Village was swept by strong westerly seas and so Olsen kept his boat anchored in Anderson Bay. He used a skiff to travel back and forth from the village.¹⁷ Tatiana was accomplished as a traditional healer. She served as a midwife for many years, and, unlike almost all the other residents, she could speak English.



Pete Olsen.
Photograph courtesy
Lael Morgan.

“One gains the impression that he is a man of action,” wrote a visiting officer of the Coast Guard cutter *Tahoe*. “The orderly appearance of the village would indicate that he is undoubtedly the driving force behind the natives.”¹⁸ Olsen ran his small store, trapped, bought and sold fox pelts, and raised sheep. (In 1933 his herd numbered 112.¹⁹) He rented his house at Unalaska. He was not, however, a good manager and his debt to the AC Company steadily grew. At the end of October 1932 he owed a little over \$2,280. He viewed his debt as belonging as much to the village as to himself and when men returned from summer work in the Pribilof Islands he would send their checks to Unalaska as payment

15 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 130.

16 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 114.

17 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 114.

18 NARA, RG 26, 611. *Tahoe*: Report of Bering Sea Cruise, August 1, 1933.

19 U.S. Coast Guard, Cruise Reports, 1933 Season. Bering Sea Patrol Force. *Tahoe*, Alaskan Cruise Report – Season 1933. NARA, RG 26

towards it.²⁰ The company expected to receive his exclusive business in return for the credit they extended, but A.H. Proctor, the company agent at Unalaska, suspected Olsen purchased goods from their competitors, such as Captain Larsen on the *Dorothy* and Captain Anderson on the *Polar Bear*. Nevertheless, Proctor tried to keep on good terms with him as he gradually paid more on the debt. After an amicable dinner with Captain Anderson and Olsen, who was making his first visit to Unalaska in a year, Proctor described the situation in a letter to company headquarters.

Mr. Olsen had the STARR bring up his seasons supplies on this trip and says he now has on hand more merchandise than he ever had at one time before and at a price very much lower than he could [have] obtained from or through us. He talked strongly about what he considered the outrageously high prices we charged him in comparison with what he now knows as the Seattle wholesale prices and at first was inclined to the idea that there seemed no basis on which he and the company could get together for future trading however before he left he came around to the belief that a conference with the Company while he is below this time might and possibly would be the means of bringing around a resumption of the relations which had been so pleasant for so many years. While he is below he will also take up with Home office the matter of settling his account.... Under the circumstances the writer did not press for an additional payment at this time....²¹

In March 1932 Olsen and what was termed the “Makushin Native Community” jointly purchased and installed an electric light plant. Four of the 14 shares were owned by Olsen and ten by the community. Community shares had to remain in the households of present families while Olsen’s four shares would belong to whoever owned his house and store. Each share entitled the owner to five lights of 24 watts each. Olsen had enough power to operate a small electric range. The signatures on the agreement provide a census of the families or adult males at Makushin in 1932:

- * Akenfa Galaktionoff
- * John Borenin
- ‡ Philip Galaktionoff
- * Peter Petekoff
- Simeon Petikoff
- * Mat Petikoff
- ‡ Aken Petikoff
- * Mat Borenin
- * Elia Borenin

20 See letters Dec. 16, 1932, and Jan. 15, 1933, from A.H. Proctor to the A.C. Company. Alaska Commercial Company Letters, Unalaska, Alaska 1932-1934. Unalaska City School.

21 A.H. Proctor to the A.C. Company. [Jan.] 30, 1933. Alaska Commercial Company Letters, Unalaska, Alaska 1932-1934. Unalaska City School.

* Simeon Lekanoff
Nick Lekanoff
Arthur Lekanoff
‡ Frank Galaktionoff.²²

*Head of household 1930 U.S. Census

‡Not at Makushin for the 1930 U.S. Census

Frank Galaktionoff, whose name appears on this list, held “dual citizenship.” He had been born at Unalaska but he was related to the Galaktionoffs at Makushin. Later in 1932, after being part of the purchase of the electric light plant, Frank found himself pitted against Olsen when John Yatchmeneff, son of the Unalaska chief, filed an assault and battery charge against Olsen with the commanding officer of the Coast Guard Cutter *Itasca* on December 3 while at Makushin.²³ In February Frank Galaktionoff joined John and his father, Alexei, in making sworn affidavits against Olsen. However, when Lt. Commander J.S. Rosenthal of the *Tahoe*, acting as a deputy marshal, tried to investigate the accusations on July 29, 1933, he found that any witnesses were then working at St. Paul in the Pribilof Islands.”²⁴

Frank Galaktionoff, 1946.
Photograph courtesy
Ray Hudson.



22 March 31, 1932, Misc. Records, Third Judicial District, Miscellaneous Records, March 31, 1932, 2887.

23 Commander, Bering Sea Patrol, to Commandant. December 3, 1932. NARA, RG 26, 611 Bering Sea 1931-32. File 611 General. Box 1864.

24 NARA, RG 26, 611. *Tahoe*: Report of Bering Sea Cruise, August 1, 1933.

Nick Lekanoff was seven months older than Nick Galaktionoff.²⁵ Both were born in 1925. Nick Galaktionoff's mother was Parascovia Lekanoff, Nick Lekanoff's half-sister. Although they were technically uncle and nephew, they were more like cousins. They were two of seven or eight children of about the same age who played, often barefoot, along the shore and in the high growth of grass and wild celery in front of the village and climbed the hills that rose around the village. Both boys had sisters. Molly was five years older than Nick Galaktionoff while Stepinida was a year younger than Nick Lekanoff. A favorite pastime was hide-and-peek, *kuukalaḡ* or *kuukaadaliḡ*, in the high wild rye in front of the village. Yakeem Petikoff, tall and thin and 24 or 25 years older than the two boys, occasionally donned a disguise, complete with horns, and frightened them home. He didn't want them down near the water too late. "We'd run like hell from the beach to home," Nick Galaktionoff recalled. The boys played with the boat Pete Olsen had built for his adopted son, John, big enough to get into but never used on the water. They would sometimes go to Olsen's pigeon coop and admire the birds. Olsen occasionally lined up the children and marched them down the short road that ran through the village and had them pull out weeds along it. Then he would turn them around, walk them back, and reward them with candy.



Two views of the chapel ruins at Makushin, 1970. Photographs by Ray Hudson.



Saturday evenings and Sunday mornings all Unangaḡ attended church where Simeon Lekanoff, with assistance from Akenfa Galaktionoff and Matfey Petikoff, read the service. All three men could read Unangam tunuu. The Chapel of the Nativity of Christ was rebuilt by the mid or late 1920s, if not earlier. It was 20 feet by 30 feet, a modest wood-frame structure, with a single bell hanging over the entrance. It was not unlike the chapel at Kashega.²⁶

25 Official records give Nick Galaktionoff's birthdate as December 19, 1925, and that was the date he frequently used. However, he said that his mother told him he was actually born November 30 and that the December date referred to his baptism.

26 Nick Lekanoff, interview protocol: Church Restitution Project. January 25, 1992. Smith and Petrivelli, 1993:1041.



This page and right:
Interior views of the
Makushin chapel,
1970. Photographs
by Ray Hudson.

Makushin men worked summers in the Pribilof Islands. While they were away, Pete Olsen would take women in a skiff to gather driftwood and stockpile it for the winter. The gardens in the village were fertilized with kelp. They grew turnips, rutabagas, cabbage, carrots and potatoes.²⁷ The village had a community steam bath. Wood was scarce but people donated pieces for the fire. There were two platform levels and the bath could get very hot. Men bathed first, followed by

²⁷ Nick Galaktionoff, recorded April 2, 1976.

the women. But when the women bathed, a man kept guard, for fear that an outsider, most likely somebody connected with prospecting around Makushin Volcano, would enter the village. Some years before either of the Nicks had been born, a woman had gone to her storage shed after Sunday services. She was found the next day, lying in the creek, bludgeoned to death.²⁸



Both boys recalled their fathers taking time to be with them. Simeon Lekanoff took his son to his camp in Portage Bay, “way inside, facing the north,” where he had a cabin built like a barabara. It was furnished with a stove, but the beds were little more than a bench or a corner on the floor covered with grass.²⁹ Once Akenfa Galaktionoff took his son out in a kayak. “Barely had my head sticking out [of the hatch opening],” Nick recalled. His father rowed down to the creek and then back to the opposite end of the village, toward what was called West End, before returning to the village where Nick’s grandmother waited. She had shouted from the shore, “Don’t take him so far out!” and when they arrived back she plucked him out of the hatch and took him home.³⁰

Makushin Village had five kayaks (baidarkas) in the 1930s. These were two-hatch craft and belonged to brothers Matfey and Yakeem Petikoff, brothers Matfey and Elia Borenin, Peter Petikoff and his son Simeon, Simeon Lekanoff and his eldest son Constantine, and to Akenfa Galaktionoff.³¹ When not in use, the skins were removed and the frames were stored in Olsen’s barn. When it was time to recover the frames, the sea lion skins were soaked for several days in the creek to soften them. They were then rubbed with old seal oil and the men positioned them

28 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 140.

29 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 99, 101.

30 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 118.

31 Nick Lekanoff and Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 96, 118-119.

around the frame. The women would then “go out there and they’d sew them together. And they’d use lots of seal oil.”³²

There were also about five dories in the village. Nick Galaktionoff recalled that once his father had money to purchase a new one. His grandfather, Simeon Lekanoff, had two, one with an inboard engine and one with no engine.³³

Twice in the fall of 1933 Olsens traveled to Unalaska for medical attention. In August they brought Annie and John aboard the *Kanaga Native*. “The daughter was brought in for treatment at the Hospital, presumably for T.B.” reported A.H. Proctor. “It should be stated that Miss Olsen does not look like a T.B. case. In fact she is a very healthy looking young person.”³⁴ The family was given accommodations at the Company House. On another occasion, Tatiana was admitted to the hospital and underwent surgery for an abdominal tumor. Dr. Leslie White allowed her to return home only after getting her to promise that she would return for observation. While at Unalaska, they again stayed at the AC Company House, in a large upstairs room. This kindness on the part of the company was explained by Proctor: “Such a mark of consideration would find appreciation and under conditions existing would rebound to the benefit of the Company. Mr. Olsen and his wife were grateful and their attitude enabled the writer to get closer to Mr. Olsen than would have otherwise been possible.” One immediate result was that Olsen suggested that Andrew Kashavaroff, who worked for the AC Company, go to Makushin to purchase furs.³⁵

In addition to Tatiana Olsen, midwife services were provided by other women. Traditional herbal remedies continued to be used including *Sixsiqaġ* (wormwood; *Artemisia unalaskensis*) in the steam bath and *Saaqudiigamaġ* (strong putchki; *Angelica lucida*) for painful or strained muscles.³⁶ *Aliġsiisiġ* (leather-leaved saxifrage; *Leptarrhena pyrolifolia*) was boiled and the liquid was drunk for illnesses such as influenza.³⁷ Teas were made from fireweed leaves and natural hot springs were used for restorative purposes.³⁸

Two more complicated procedures practiced by his grandmother were described by Nick Galaktionoff. The first was the reduction of an infection by the use of wood that had been around “for years and years” and decayed almost to the point of dust. This was collected and, after being thoroughly dried on the stove, it was crushed into a powder, “just like brown chocolate.” The infected wound was washed and somehow treated with a medicinal plant and then the powdered wood was applied. “As soon as they did that,” Nick said, “the wound dried up. All

32 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 98.

33 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 145.

34 Undated fragment [prior to August 8, 1933]. A.H. Proctor to the A.C. Company. Alaska Commercial Company Letters, Unalaska, Alaska 1932-1934. Unalaska City School.

35 Undated fragment [Fall 1933]. A.H. Proctor to the A.C. Company. Alaska Commercial Company Letters, Unalaska, Alaska 1932-1934. Unalaska City School.

36 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 104-105.

37 Golodoff, *Wildflowers of Unalaska Island*, 96.

38 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 134-135.

the greasy oily parts dried out.” This procedure was repeated three or four times. An infected head wound Nick developed (after running into the sharp end of his father’s spade) was treated this way.³⁹

The other procedure was one Nick saw twice. Although imperfectly remembered, it suggests some of the complexity of Unangaᵰ medical practices. It involved “a special root on this island” that was applied to the body to relieve pain. This sounds as though it were the root of the strong putchki, *Angelica lucida*, that was heated and placed on the affected body part, always over a protective covering such as a fine layer of grass. It could not, however, be applied to legs without precautionary steps or the “pain” from the wound would travel upwards and attack the heart or the brain, causing death. Nick saw his grandmother take the necessary safeguards prior to treating Philip Galaktionoff for a serious injury that had swollen his ankle. A cloth was soaked in a red solution that Nick suspected had been rendered from some part of a seal or octopus. After the cloth had dried, Marva tied it just below Philip’s knee. Only after that did she apply the root to his ankle. After two or three daily treatments over the course of two or three days, the pain was gone and the red tourniquet was removed.

I asked my grandmother why they used that red band in that way. She said the red band was used to prevent the pain from traveling to the heart. The pain in the leg couldn’t go under the red bandage. It just disappeared right at that point. If the red band wasn’t used, the pain could travel and locate anywhere else—in the heart or in the brain.⁴⁰

A parallel might be drawn between this procedure and the practice, described by Andrew Makarin, of the grass rope strung across Beaver Inlet to prevent the escape of whales.

One summer Philip Galaktionoff fished for Pete Olsen, preparing smoked and salted salmon. Nick once described Philip as a bald-headed and comical guy, “for every little word you said, he had something to make you laugh.”⁴¹ He would bring a skiff filled with fish to the village where women helped him split and prepare them. One day, while collecting driftwood for the smoke house, Philip found a nest of eaglets. Before he knew what had happened, an adult bird dove at him, swept off his hat, and dropped it in the bay. Philip needed his hat and he charged after it. A little later, Nick saw him coming into the village from across the river. “I noticed his hand was bandaged and his face was bloody,” Nick said. He didn’t think much about it until he saw Tatiana Olsen dressing his uncle’s head wounds “and everyone was laughing away.”⁴²

39 Nick Galaktionoff in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 29.

40 Nick Galaktionoff in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 29.

41 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 103.

42 When I edited this story for *Cuttlefish Two: Four Villages*, I mistakenly thought the story was about Pete Olsen.

Other illnesses or medical complications often meant death. Eva Lekanoff, wife of Constantine Lekanoff, gave birth on the first of February 1935 and died of post partum hemorrhage a few hours later. Their son survived only a month and a half.⁴³

Arletta Carter, the teacher at Kashega, visited Makushin for a few hours on May 26, 1933. She was so impressed that she lobbied to have the Kashega school transferred there, a suggestion the Office of Indian Affairs agreed to in 1934. She listed seventeen possible students between the ages of 5 and 21. Her description of Pete Olsen and his “charming, cultured Native wife, and two worthy adopted children” is effusive. Despite what she had heard about him while at Unalaska, Carter found Olsen “thrifty” and “progressive.” She described his home as having electric lights, electric stove, bathtub and toilet, a radio, a piano, ukuleles, and a friendly dog. His store was stocked with food, clothing, and household articles. His sheep provided fresh meat for the village; his chickens, fresh eggs. The community gardens he oversaw provided fresh vegetables. He did not allow alcohol in the village. He had trained and disciplined the Natives “to work efficiently.” If all that were not enough, he had built “a swing at the beach where the children may swing at leisure and enjoy the music of the waves.” Makushin was a village with “innumerable future possibilities” and, if given a choice, she would prefer teaching in Pete Olsen’s barn to returning to Kashega where her time was wasted in fruitless effort.⁴⁴ It is difficult to imagine how Carter could have been more mistaken.

Annie Olsen was in the hospital again, perhaps from July 1935 through January 1936.⁴⁵ Her health may have been one of the reasons Dr. Leslie A. White decided to walk to Makushin in December 1935. Winter hiking in the Aleutians can be either extremely difficult or remarkably easy, depending on whether or not the snow is frozen hard enough to provide a smooth firm surface. He traveled with four men and a boy from Unalaska. They took the frequently used trail that began at the head of Captains Bay and ended in Makushin’s Portage Bay. The trip was reported in an article in the *Seward Gateway* in which the trail was described as the one “for which the road commission has been asked to provide shelter cabins.” This request had been spurred because it was “the same trail upon which Harry Olsen [no relation to Peter Olsen] was found frozen to death two winters ago.” “Handsome” Harry had put down the mirror he was fond of gazing into and ventured out into the weather one time too many. The doctor’s hike, according to the article, was “15 miles of rugged mountainous traveling which ends with a pleasant little muscle developing row in an open boat of 10 miles or more.”

43 Murray, *Mini-biographies*.

44 Carter, Arletta to Paul W. Gordon, Office of Indian Affairs. September 5 and 8, 1933. NARA, RG 75.

45 The length of her stay is unclear because the letter indicating her presence was about how the hospital’s accounting was off. Binder May 1-15, 1936. NARA RG 75 Bureau of Indian Affairs. Alaska Division, Correspondence of the Division. Chronological File. Copies of letters and telegrams sent by Chief of Alaska Section of the BIA, 1935-1937.

With the exception of two cases of tuberculosis, the 42 residents of Makushin were in excellent health. There were 12 school-aged children. The houses and surroundings were “clean and neat.” This “must have been an every day cleanliness,” the paper concluded, because the doctor’s arrival had been unexpected. The village had only a “meager supply of staple articles of food.” The author was almost flippant about the poverty.

The natives of Makushin are a very uncomplaining type of people and the fact that they were short of food and obliged to travel all the way to Unalaska to purchase the small amounts their funds warranted, and then pack their supplies on their backs over a 15-miles mountain trail, did not seem a matter to raise much fuss about.

“Things have to go very radically wrong in Makushin,” the article concluded, “before any complaints are heard.”⁴⁶ Things would go radically wrong, and soon.

46 *Seward Gateway*, January 18, 1936.



Arctic Foxes, *Alopex lagopus*, From *Mostly Mammals: Zoological Essays* by Richard Lydekker, 1930. The lower figure shows the white phase in winter coat; the upper and central figures are likely the same phase in summer dress (with center in blue phase). [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alopex_lagopus)

Chapter 12

Biorka



Henry Swanson recalled that, “Biorka had been a strong village clean up to the war. Makushin and Kashega people kept leaving for Unalaska, but Biorka was living good. They were closer to Unalaska, too, and could come in when they wanted to.”¹ Several factors contributed to Biorka’s vitality. They had a number of strong leaders, including Jacob Kozloff, Alec Ermeloff, and Andrew Makarin. They had an abundance of deep-sea fish. They were, indeed, relatively close to Unalaska. The preferred route was to travel past Unalga Island and around the northeast end of Unalaska Island, but such journeys were usually deferred until after the last of May, when the weather moderated. The trip could be made in eight to ten hours. When men were ready to return home, Unalaska kayakers would accompany them as far as Priest Rock.² Traveling around the northeast end of Unalaska Island presented challenges. “The passage past Fisherman’s Point, even in good weather and taking advantage of tide flows, is very rough for a short distance,” declared a 1937 mining report,

due to the near presence of a reef that extends from the North Pacific Ocean to within a short distance of the Fisherman’s rocks and a rip tide caused by the meeting of waters from the North Pacific Ocean and Bering Sea, and should be attempted only in calm weather and with a sea-worthy boat.³

When the weather was more problematical, people traveled by kayak or skiff further inside Beaver Inlet, along the Sedanka side, until reaching the northeast tip of Tanaskan Bay where Andrew Makarin had a fish camp, at a place called *Aasxiyuux*. From here the traveler would cut across the inlet to Ugadaga, on the Unalaska side. If need be, a stop could be made at Dushkot Island where Ruff

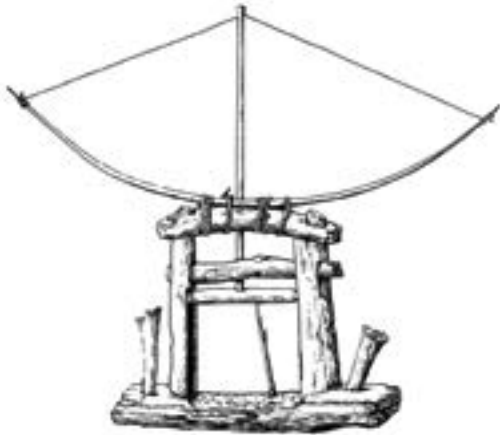
1 Swanson, *The Unknown Islands*, 191.

2 Nick Galaktionoff in *Cuttlefish Two*, 60.

3 Lerchen, *Biorka Mine*, 1.

Ermeloff (Alec Ermeloff's son) had a camp.⁴ The boats were pulled above high water and the travelers then hiked the long-established trail to Unalaska Village.

There was an unusual pond near Andrew's camp. Fresh water was collected from it; but when the tide went out, the water level fell. When hard east or north winds blew, the water became salty and undrinkable. When that happened, they would go to the creek to get fresh water.⁵



Two fox traps introduced to the Aleutians in the 1740s by the promyshlenniks: the "bow trap" or *chalkanaĭ* (above/and see page 33) and the "skull crusher" (below). Illustrations by Mark Luttrell in *Chasing the Dark*. Courtesy Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Biorka shared the poverty systemic to the region during the closing years of sea otter hunting. The residents turned to a variety of occupations: fishing, trapping red and cross fox, and working both at Unalaska and in the Pribilof Islands. Biorka received fewer visits from Revenue Service and Coast Guard cutters than either Makushin or Kashega, situated along the route to the more populated villages of Nikolski, Atka, and Attu. Consequently, there are fewer reports about Biorka and this paucity leads to unanswerable questions. For example, when the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Manning* visited in August 1915, the year the Revenue Service became the U.S. Coast Guard, the assistant surgeon learned that during the previous year there had been nine deaths in the village (two men, two women and five boys).⁶ No reason was given for this unusually high mortality.

In 1912 the Navy's Alaskan Radio Expedition erected a station on Unalga Island as part of a four-year effort to provide better communications linking coastal Alaska with Seattle.⁷ Construction was plagued by violent weather. The 180-foot wharf washed away shortly after completion and had to be rebuilt. The buildings included a dwelling with the radio equipment installation. This was surrounded by a glass porch that could buffer the cold and muffle the noise from high winds that interfered with operations. There were also a powerhouse (attached to the dwelling by a covered passage), a cottage for the electrician, and buildings for oil, coal, and a gasoline engine. The station was well supplied, including a library of 400 books and a 44-foot motorboat. The station was commissioned on September 1 and less than two weeks later another

4 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 167.

5 Nick Galaktionoff, recorded in *Unangam tunuu*, March 26, 1976, translated by Ishmael Gromoff.

6 Wm. C. Witte, Ass't Surgeon, to F.G. Dodge, Report of medical work done on Alaskan cruise, July, August and September, 1915. NARA, RG 26, file 611, box 1841.

7 Dodd, "Alaskan Naval Radio Expedition, 1912."

storm wiped out the wharf and carried away the station's motorboat. The entire operation was short-lived—poor reception and the difficulty of supplying it were reasons for its closure in 1915. Nevertheless, the construction project provided employment for Biorka men including Andrew Makarin, Alec Ermeloff, and others. Alec was paid \$9 and five pounds of pilot bread for each of the two months he worked.



The wharf on Unalga, with the USS Nero, 1912. This wharf replaced the first that was destroyed in a storm. U.S. Naval Historical Center. Photo #: NH 105434.

Nick Galaktionoff understood that Biorka residents began building wood-frame houses following construction of the radio station. However, a 1915 report described Biorka as having ten barabaras and no wood-frame structures for the 30 residents, 17 adults and 13 children. The construction of wood-frame houses probably began shortly after the closure of the station. In addition to receiving unused lumber, it is probable that Biorka people salvaged materials from the abandoned station. This included hefty timbers—10-by-12s and 12-by-12s left over from the wharf. These were towed to the village using kayaks and then sawed into usable lumber. Driftwood was scarce in Beaver Inlet and men had to travel long distances to find it.⁸ Additional wooden houses were built later using wood from the whaling plant at Akutan and from Unalaska.

Around the time wooden houses were introduced, Andrew Makarin and Eustina “Esther” Sovoroff of Akutan were married. He was in his late twenties. In contrast, Alex Ermeloff, only eight years Andrew’s senior, had been married to Anesia Siftsof for over a decade and was probably widowed by this time. The Ermeloffs had nine children between 1901 and 1912.⁹ Although the 1920 census shows Andrew and Esther with a daughter, Anastasia, born in 1916, she seems to have died young since her name is

8 Nick Galaktionoff, recording April 2, 1976. See also Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 59.

9 Murray, *Mini-biographies*.

missing from records after the 1920 census. Their granddaughter, Anna Jean Bereskin, recalled Esther saying that she had a son whom they named Terentii, after Andrew's father. This child also died young and afterwards they were unable to have further children. In the early 1930s they adopted Irene Borenin, Anna Jean's mother. In 1917 Esther was brought to Unalaska with a broken leg. Nicholas Bolshanin was the commissioner and, as he had done for another woman a few months earlier, he placed her in jail so that she could be cared for by Dr. A. W. Newhall of the Jesse Lee Home. The next day, May 31, he conveniently found Andrew guilty of vagrancy and sentenced him to two months in the same jail.¹⁰ In 1919, presumably after the pandemic had passed the region, Andrew returned to Unalaska when Father Hotovitsky had repairs made to the Church of the Holy Ascension. Because a large number of Unalaska men had gone to the Pribilof Islands for the summer seal harvest, men from the outer villages were able to find employment. Andrew stayed for three years, working at whatever was available including aboard coaling ships for the AC Company.

Although Biorka was comparatively rich in terms of subsistence, especially fish and birds, the residents visited Unalaska to purchase goods at the stores and to receive used clothing from the Jesse Lee Home. The clothes came in annual shipments of "mission boxes" from parishes in the States. Occasionally staff members at the Home could only shake their heads in bewilderment when they unpacked what had been sent.

Once a barrel of straw hats arrived—to a place where, as [Mary] Winchell put it, the wind blows the hair off a dog. They received a shipment of fans and a dozen black swallow-tailed coats. Men from Biorka village eventually took the coats, leaving Winchell to reflect how coats that had once attended concerts in Boston now hunted ducks along the Biorka shore.¹¹

When the Home closed in 1926, the staff cleaned out the accumulation of 35 years of operation and sent clothes to Nikolski and Biorka.

People came from Biorka to attend services at the Church of the Holy Ascension. In 1911 Epiphany fell on January 19. This commemorated the baptism of Christ and was observed by the blessing of the water. People from Biorka were present and had the priest bless a keg of water that they then placed on a sled and pulled over the long pass to Beaver Inlet. The school teachers, Noah and Clara Davenport, happened to be out hiking and used the hard packed trail as a path back to the village.¹²

10 Record of Proceedings in Criminal Cases, Third Division, Unalaska Precinct, N. Gray Commissioner, 198-201.

11 Hudson, *Family After All*, 311-312.

12 Davenport, Clara Ellen and Noah Cleveland Davenport, *Unalaska Days: A Diary* (August 7, 1910-August 7, 1912). Xerox copy, Unalaska City School Library.

Jacob Kozloff was a generation older than Makarin and Ermeloff, having been born around 1863. During the late 1880s, he had been an active sea otter hunter. We do not know when he became chief of Biorka, but he served after 1910, during a period when legal claims for land proliferated as individuals filed for homesteads, trade and manufacturing sites related to mining and to salting and canning fish. Sedanka Island became part of the Aleutian Islands Reservation for the preservation of native birds, animals, and fish, established by President Taft in 1913. On March 30, 1918, Kozloff filed for a trade and manufacturing site at the location of the old Biorka village. The claim was made “for the whole village” and the reasons were a combination of subsistence and commercial salting of salmon and cod.

That the specific and particular use for which said land is claimed is for our own fishing business and for using same for salting salmon and codfish, that same is our own old village and for that reason we claim the whole of said village for living and carrying on the fishing business.¹³

Biorka was the only one of the three villages to take such action. Wooden dories were used alongside kayaks in the 1920s. Andrew and Eustina Makarin would row from Biorka to Unalga, locate a driftwood log, and then take all day towing it back to the village. In the late 1920s when outboard engines became more common, Andrew purchased a boat from the whaling station at Akutan and installed an engine.

It was a double-ender, about a thirty-footer. It had a pretty good-sized old Clift engine in it. He used it to come to Unalaska to get groceries and supplies and take them to Biorka. He used it only in the summer time when the weather was good. The winter was too rough for the boat because it had a small sail in it and there was too much weather in the winter. It was a heavy boat and when he wasn't using it he would have to pull it up out of the water. In the summer, however, he kept it anchored all the time. If the weather changed he would move the boat to a different location.¹⁴

Eventually he had two skiffs: the larger one for hauling wood and hunting sea lions, and a smaller double-ender with an inboard engine that he used when traveling shorter distances such as to his camp or to Ugadaga Bay. He also continued using a kayak into the 1930s.

Whatever potential for violence existed in small Unanga communities was heightened during times of excessive alcohol use. This was true for Unalaska and all the smaller villages. Irene Makarin told how Eustina was seriously injured when an intoxicated man threw her against a woodpile. A splinter pierced her eye and, despite efforts by medical personnel at Unalaska, she

¹³ *Record Book 1*, District Court of Alaska, 3rd Division, Book #79574:80.

¹⁴ Nick Galaktionoff in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 60.

eventually lost all sight in it.¹⁵ An even more traumatic incident occurred in the village when seventeen-year-old Matthew Popoff shot his stepfather to death in 1926. According to Anfesia Shapsnikoff, Ignaty Popoff was a particularly cruel individual who harassed and misused his wife and constantly forced his stepson to work.¹⁶ On November 25, 1926, during a village-wide celebration when both Ignaty and Matthew had been drinking, Matthew sought out his stepfather. "He was sleeping," Anfesia said. "His mouth open." The boy took a rifle and shot him. Word of the murder reached Unalaska almost immediately and the deputy marshal arrived the following day aboard the Department of Fisheries boat *Eider* and Matthew was arrested.¹⁷ Barbara Popoff was left with a five-year-old daughter. A year later, Barbara succumbed to tuberculosis of the throat and her daughter, Agafia, was left an orphan.¹⁸

Biorka Households in 1930 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1930)

Alec Ermeloff, age 47 (head of household)
Marie Ermeloff, age 28 (wife of Alec Ermeloff)
Sophia Ermeloff, age 26 (daughter of Alec Ermeloff)
Rufus Ermeloff, age 22 (son of Alec Ermeloff)
Daria Ermeloff, age 17 (daughter of Alec Ermeloff)
August Ermeloff, age 9 (daughter of Alec Ermeloff)

Andrew Makarin, age 40 (head of household)
Eustina "Esther" Sovoroff (Makarin), age 39 (wife of Andrew Makarin)
Eakinf [Akinf] Gerasimoff, age 17 (lodger of Andrew Makarin)

Elia Makarin, age 39 (head of household)
Agrafina Makarin, age 38 (wife of Elia Makarin)
Marie Makarin, age 17 (daughter of Elia Makarin)
Martha Makarin, age 8 (daughter of Elia Makarin)

Kessick [Kerik] Popoff, age 60 (head of household)
Anastasia Popoff, age 60 (wife of Kerik)
Ephrosenia "Elsie" Ermeloff, age 20 (adoptive daughter of Kerik)
Agafia Popoff, age 9 (granddaughter of Kerik)

Jacob Lukanin, age 28 (head of household)
Mary Lukanin, age 20 (wife of Jacob Lukanin)
Irene Lukanin, age 6 months (daughter of Jacob Lukanin)
Gladfiena Lukanin, age 16 (lodger of Jacob Lukanin)
Peter Lukanin, age 13 (lodger of Jacob Lukanin)

Irene Makarin was born in 1930, the daughter of Anna and Mike Borenin. After Anna died in 1933, Mike was left with two older sons and three-year-old Irene. Andrew and Eustina approached him and he gave permission for them to adopt Irene. Their home became her home; she became their daughter. Irene's descriptions of Biorka prior to World War II portrayed a village that was well-suited to subsistence activities.¹⁹ The island was rich with blueberries,

15 Irene Makarin in *The Beginning of Memory*, 199.

16 Anfesia Shapsnikoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, November 25, 1969.

17 *Seward Gateway*, November 27, 1926.

18 Murray, *Mini-biographies*.

19 Irene Makarin in *The Beginning of Memory*, 186-205.

salmonberries, and mossberries. A local leaf was used for tea. It was picked in September and October, brought indoors and dried. It was then mixed with regular tea to extend that more expensive product. Water was drawn from the lake and when the water level fell it was collected from a stream or spring on the side of the hill and carried to the homes. This was a job given to children who used small buckets.

Except for serious emergencies, traditional medicines were used. For example, Andrew skimmed oil off the surface of still ponds and stored it in a jar. Eustina would apply a drop to her eyes after rinsing them. He also combined applications of the strong putschke with prolonged steambaths to treat his wife's back problems. Although gradually going blind, Esther was one of the village midwives. She was a skilled healer who was frequently called upon. Moses Gordieff recalled that he once had an intestinal malady and Esther massaged him, "rubbing all over me for a long time" until he had recovered.²⁰

Both Andrew Makarin and Ruff Ermeloff read services in the well-maintained Chapel of St. Nicholas. Families kept dogs and cats and a few raised chickens. Kerosene lanterns lit the homes, and there was a record player shared by the community. "My daddy used to tell me that if there's somebody hungry," explained Irene, "if there's somebody got no place to stay, you just help them." Several of the men, including Andrew Makarin, George Yatchmenoff, and Alec Ermeloff, kept journals in Aleut, recording what they trapped or hunted. They had been taught to read and write by their fathers. Theirs was the last generation to be literate in *Unangam tunuu*.



Esther and Andrew Makarin (left); Agrafina and Elia Makarin (right). Photograph courtesy Ray Hudson.

20 Moses Gordieff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 210.

As a Native community, Unalaska men worked through the St. Ponteleiman Brotherhood to secure a productive blue fox island. They eventually leased Carlisle, among the Islands of Four Mountains. Sedanka was proposed as another possibility, but the majority of the brotherhood felt it would prove unsatisfactory because it was rocky and mountainous and the pass separating it from Unalaska was too narrow. Its size and terrain would make it difficult to eliminate the indigenous red fox that, being larger, would drive off any blue fox. Nevertheless, the Unalaska community leased Sedanka on July 24, 1930, for \$50.²¹ In August 1933 the Coast Guard cutter *Tahoe* anchored along the north side of Unimak Island where ten Unalaska trappers came aboard along with a dozen crated live fox. The ship returned to Unalaska for the night. The next day five of the men proceeded aboard the *Tahoe* to Sedanka where the fox were released east of the village. George Yatchmenoff, who had once lived at Kashega, was among the trappers and he hiked to the village where he remained while the other four men returned to Unalaska.²² In 1932 he had married Alec Ermeloff's daughter, Ephrosenia or "Elsie." His first wife had died in 1927 and now his son William joined his father and stepmother and before long they had become integral members of the Biorka community.



Biorka prior to World War II. Courtesy University of Alaska Fairbanks, 1985-0012 -00050.

As early as 1935 Biorka residents partnered with Unangaʔ at Unalaska to get reindeer transplanted to Sedanka Island through a petition prepared by John Yatchmenoff on behalf of the Aleutian Islands Precinct Democratic Club. In 1936 G.R. Gardner—who had helped the Unalaska brotherhood with their fox island permit—followed up with another request and, in reply, the superintendent of the reindeer service wrote that 60 breeding female reindeer and five bulls were to be delivered in the spring of 1937 (with the same

number for Akutan). The herd, he explained, would grow slowly, with only 94 adult animals ready for butchering at the end of eleven years.²³ The animals, however, never arrived.

In 1936 Biorka was said to have 44 residents: 12 adult men, nine women, and 23 children.²⁴ A somewhat detailed description of Biorka came in late September 1937 when the Coast Guard Cutter *Northland* visited. The ship's doctor examined each individual. "Here as at other Aleutian villages there appeared a great deal

21 State of Alaska, Third Judicial District. Miscellaneous Records, 239.

22 NARA, RG 26, Records of the Bering Sea Patrol 1926-1940 (1932-1933). 531-621, NC-31, Entry #29, file 611-601 Cruise Reports, 1933 Season, Bering Sea Patrol Force.

23 NARA RG 75, Alaska Reindeer Service, box 54, Sedanka (Unalaska).

24 NARA, RG 26, box 43. Daphne Reports 13 SPF 1936. September 4, 1936, R.J. Mitchel, Asst. Surgeon, USPHS, medical officer to Commander, BSPF.

of eye trouble,” he wrote. “The children were just recovering from an attack of measles.” His report described an indolent population, a conclusion dramatically at odds with the active village described by others. He wrote, “The natives had a run down, hollow chested, weak eyed appearance of the average Aleut of the present time.” Captain F.A. Zeusler described four houses and a church. The homes “were frame structures and were clean and comfortable. All were fitted with wood burning stoves. Driftwood is secured on the beach. At the time of the visit there were only two men in the village, two women and six children. None of the natives could speak English.” Zeusler found that “the principal food consists of fish, flour, tea, sugar and other store bought food obtained in Unalaska. There were several small boats in the village and one motor boat.” He concluded that the general condition of the village was good although “there is no store in the village and no radio. A tin and zinc mine is located in the vicinity.”²⁵

This mine, like the reindeer project, never materialized. In the summer of 1937, F.H. Lerchen had exploratory work done, employing six Biorka men including “the Chief of Sedanka Island.” From June 12 to July 19, they were “constantly working with picks, shovels and occasional use of dynamite, stripping moss, dirt and broken slide rock to extend the surface exposures made by Nature to determine, as near as possible, the extent and nature of the ore.”²⁶ Lerchen wrote that only “about 5 natives” lived in the village—the majority of the men were probably working in the Pribilof Islands that summer. He described the village as having “a few dwellings and a beautiful little church.” In 1942 Fred Schroeder (previously the trader at Attu) sent this report and other material to the commissioner of mines in Juneau who replied that the grade of zinc would require a large mining operation and was, at that time, of doubtful profitability.

On February 1, 1938, the Biorka Native Community filed for a townsite of 1500 meandering feet along the beach at Samgathik Bay. It extended 800 feet back from the water. This was located on the northeast side of Beaver Inlet, about two miles south of the village. Alex Ermeloff, as chief of the community, filed the claim that was witnessed by Andrew Makarin and John A. Yatchmeneff.²⁷ As the 1930s ended, Biorka seems to have achieved an equilibrium in which subsistence was balanced with occasional wage employment. In 1939, Akinfa Ermeloff, Ruff Ermeloff, George Yatchmenoff, and Andrew Makarin worked at St. Paul. Andrew arrived in late May while the others came the first of July. In 1940, they were joined by the younger men Peter Lukanin and Willie Yatchmenoff. Henry Swanson’s description of Biorka as “a strong village” is borne out by subsequent events and by the degree to which residents survived the evacuation that was soon to sever them from the island.

25 NARA, RG 26, box 48. Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Records of the Bering Sea Patrol 1926-1940. 1937. 601, 64, 6641. File: Northland-General BSPF 1937 Folder 1 of 2.

26 Lerchen, *Biorka Mine*.

27 Third Judicial District, Miscellaneous Records, 502.



Kashega Village. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

Chapter 13

Kashega: A Green and Pleasant Place



Four days after John Yatchmenoff died on October 3, 1932, Kashega men traveled to Unalaska aboard the *Umnak Native*, a vessel owned by the Nikolski community. The purchases they made “stimulated our cash sales,” wrote A.H. Proctor. “These men will return to their homes on the ‘UMNAK NATIVE.’”¹ Fall trapping necessitated travel aboard one of several vessels operating in the area and the *Umnak Native* frequently made trips the entire length of the Chain. It had been built in Seattle and was a 49-ton vessel, 59.2 feet long and 16.5 feet across. That fall, the *Umnak Native* carried trappers to various islands and in late January 1933 it left Unalaska to collect the men and return them to their villages. For this trip, Bishop Antonin and Michael Tutiakoff, a deacon with the Unalaska church, were given passage to visit communities to the west of Unalaska. On January 24, while sheltering from a storm in Inanudak Bay on the west side of Umnak Island, the vessel wrecked and eleven perished. Among the men from Nikolski who died was Stephan Krukoff whose sister was Efemia Kudrin of Kashega. Her husband, John J. Kudrin, had died a few years earlier.

Bishop Antonin survived the wreck and in July 1933 he visited Kashega aboard the *Tahoe*. Apparently, the village had not yet formally elected a new chief following Yatchmenoff’s death. “There is no permanent chief,” according to the vessel’s seasonal report. “John Descisoff [Denisoff] is acting as chief at present.” He was soon accepted as the community’s leader. The bishop, a somewhat heavy-handed individual, was never reluctant to step into a fray. A year later he arrogantly informed the office of education that he planned to move the entire population of Kashega to Umnak.²

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- 1 W.H. Proctor to Alaska Commercial Company, San Francisco. October 7, 1932. Alaska Commercial Company Letters, Unalaska, Alaska, 1932-1934. Unalaska School/Community Library Alaska History Collection. 1977.
 - 2 NARA, RG 75, Letters received. Telegram, February 19, 1934, Hawkesworth to Paul W. Gordon.

If Arletta Carter, the school teacher then at Kashega, heard about this, she probably rejoiced. Following her brief visit to Makushin, she had reluctantly returned to Kashega where she declared its future to be “one of drinking, debauchery, disease and death.”³ Carter had arrived in 1932, replacing Halfton Burgh who taught briefly after James B. and Carrye Henderson. She was from Berkley, California, and her initial reports glowed with praise. “There is a splendid community spirit,” she wrote in the spring of 1933. She told how the men had built a new village steam bath the previous fall. Families contributed money for a well and a pump, replacing the waterline that had run from the lake. All of this was possible because the village had income.

Sophie Kudrin managed to slip Eva in among Carter’s primary students, but after thirty-eight days of giving her “busy work only” Carter insisted the four-year-old stay at home. As a teacher, she was neither as enthusiastic nor as effective as the Hendersons had been. The first year, she failed two students and promoted five (including George Gordaoff whom she sent to Unalaska to live with his father, Alex Gordieff; George’s mother Lucy had died in 1930). Two students withdrew, including Martha Denisoff who had written enthusiastic letters under the former teachers, and Mike Kudrin who had won the forestry essay.



Starring in Kashega with Harry Jacobsen (center). Alice Moller photograph from *Cuttlefish Two: Four Villages*.

Mike had been somewhat old for grade school. On March 5, 1932, he and Dora Borenin traveled to Unalaska where they were married at the Church of the Holy Ascension. She was seventeen and he was twenty-five. “My brother and Mike Kudrin were friends,” Dora said. “I told my brother that I wasn’t going to get married. I used to write letters to the store when he wanted to order things from Unalaska, but when he told me I had to get married I wouldn’t write letters for him.” Vasilii had informed Dora of her impending marriage shortly after Russian Christmas, January 7, which was followed by days of starring, when a decorative twirling star was carried from home to home and blessings were sung for the residents. After starring and before Epiphany, there were days of masquerading

3 Arletta Carter to Paul W. Gordon, September 5 and 8, 1933. NARA, RG 75.

during which individuals dressed in costumes and went from house to house commemorating the search that Herod's men had made for the infant Jesus.



Waiting at the Unalaska dock for the mailboat to return to Kashega.

1. Feckla Denisoff (wife of Nikefer Denisoff)
2. Sisters Oleta Borenin and Sophia Kudrin (left to right)
3. Alice Moller.
4. Anna and Carl (Carol) Moller (left to right)
5. Sophia Kudrin's daughter Eva.
6. Mary Moller

Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

I was in the living room behind the door, on top of a half a sack of flour, sitting there crying. I told him I wasn't going to marry. That night we had a masquerading. Mike came to my house. I knew Mike because he wasn't dressed up. We were all dancing, you know, and a pitcher of cold water I spilled on him! I did that so I wouldn't have to have him for my husband! But I was married with him for thirty-five years. I was married in 1932 and we had five girls.⁴

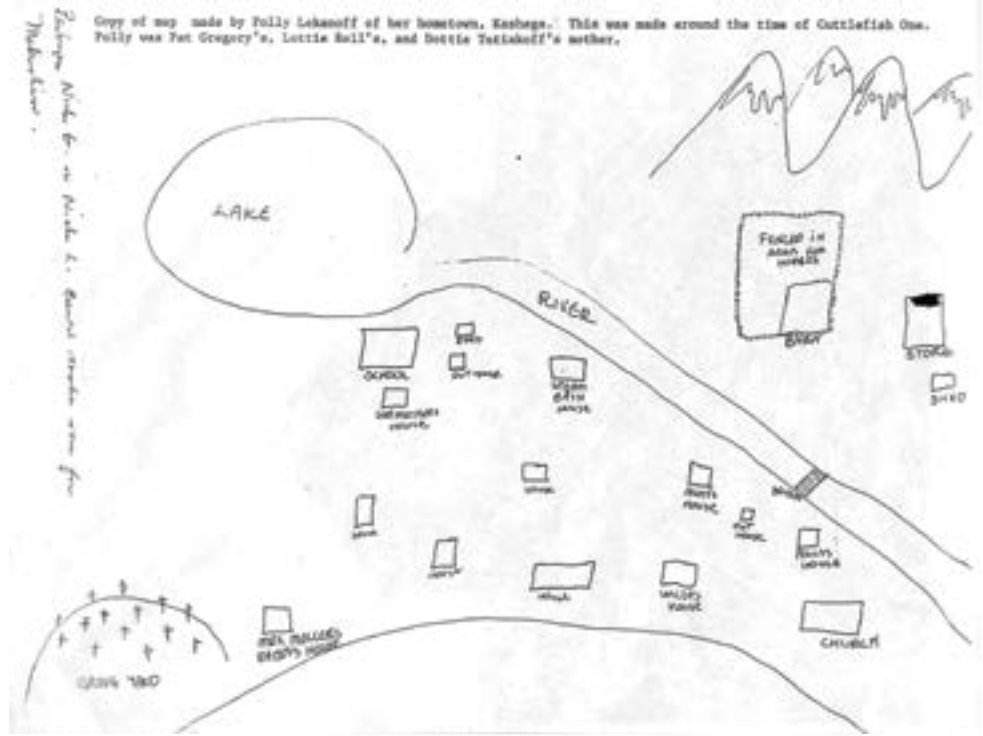
At the conclusion of masquerading, there was a ritual cleansing that symbolized washing away the demons. At Kashega this was done by going to the river and pouring fresh water over oneself. "I used to like to get more than Mrs. Moller [Alice Denisoff]," Dora recalled, "so I put two buckets of water on me! Boy! Tried to be tough, I guess!"⁵

In the early 1970s, one of Dora's daughters, Polly Lekanoff, drew a map of Kashega Village as she remembered it. It showed a church near the bay, nine houses, a school with an outhouse and shed near the lake, one additional out-house, and a cemetery at the opposite end of the bay from the church. A footbridge over the creek led to the store with its shed and a barn with a fenced

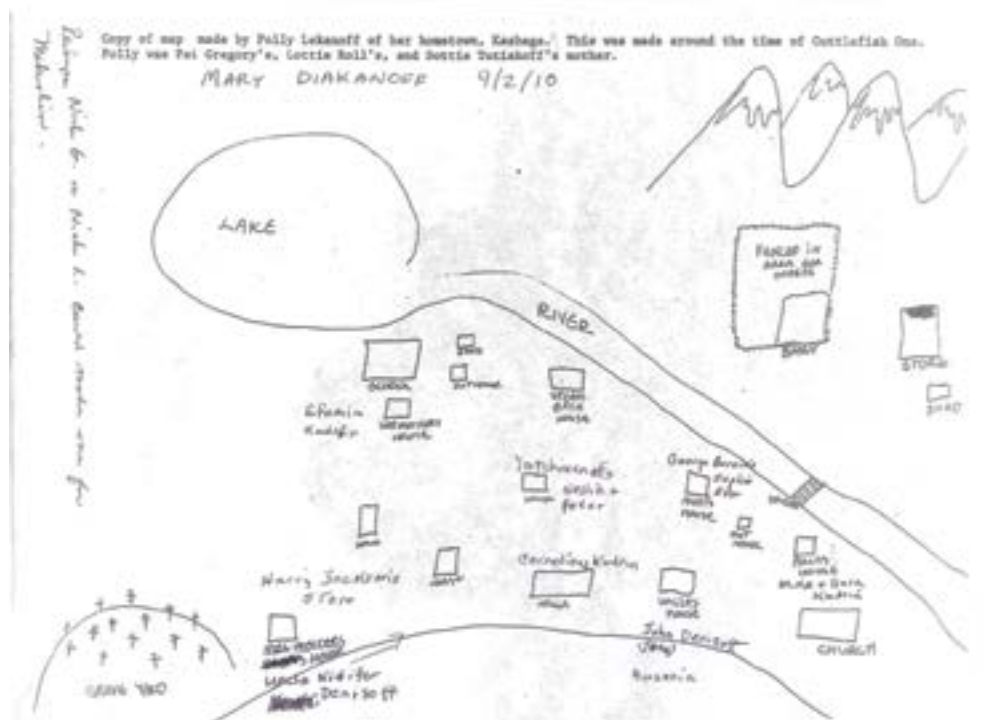
⁴ Dora Kudrin in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 43.

⁵ Dora Kudrin, recording with Ray Hudson, December 8, 1975.

in area for horses. She identified the buildings and this identification was expanded in 2010 by Mary Diakanoff.



Map drawn by Polly Lekanoff. Image courtesy O. Patricia Gregory



Polly Lekanoff map with revisions by Mary Diakanoff, 2010.

In the early 1930s, the Western Pacific Livestock Company moved its ranch headquarters from Chernofski to Kashega. This provided seasonal employment for a few local men. It was also good news for Harry Jacobsen who owned the store and had started a soft-drink bottling company. At first he put out just a few bottles, but by 1933 he had hired an assistant. “Numerous trading vessels come into the harbor bringing raw products in the form of salt, barrels, sugar, malt, and so forth,” wrote the *Seward Gateway*, “and take on exports such as fur, wool, salt, codfish, mutton, bottled soft-beverages, and fine baskets woven by the native women.”⁶ Although her memories were those of a child, Eva recalled that Jacobsen’s store always seemed to be well-stocked with shoes and raingear.

For Carter, Jacobsen was the embodiment of all that was evil. She called him a “lazy drunkard” and “unprincipled.” She castigated him for operating a store out of his house that was more like “an old time saloon, gambling den and red-light house—a rendezvous for ‘Hoodlums.’” She suspected him of trading alcohol for fox pelts and turning everyone, men and women, into “habitual drunkards.” Not particularly healthy herself, Carter left Kashega several times, taking a boat to Unalaska, Seward and eventually Seattle. While staying at Unalaska she was dined and interrogated by A.H. Proctor of the A.C. Company about Jacobsen’s doings. She led Proctor to believe Jacobson sent regular deposits to a bank in Bremerton, Washington, where “he has quite a nest-egg laid aside....”⁷ The company suspected he made purchases from competitors and was deliberately planning to evade payment on his debt. They considered seeking out the bank account and placing an attachment on it. Proctor later shared all this with Jack Martin, to whom Jacobson also owed money. An equal-opportunity



Mary Moller with her aunt Oleta (Aleta) Borenin. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

6 “Kashega Notes” in *Seward Gateway*, April 26, 1933.

7 A.H. Proctor to the A.C. Company. Jan. 16, 1933. Alaska Commercial Company Letters, Unalaska, Alaska 1932-1934. Unalaska City School.

accuser, Carter claimed the AC Company sent “bums” to Kashega specifically “to raise ‘H---’ with the objective of exploiting the Natives.”⁸

Jacobsen was hired as caretaker for the sheep ranch during its off seasons. (The commanding officer of the *Tahoe* wrote August 1, 1933, that there was a small herd of thirty-six sheep near the village belonging to the Aleutian Livestock Company of Chernofski.) Jacobsen allowed the village men to use the company’s barn as a shop where they built a new motorboat from the wreck of another. He continued operating a codfish saltery at Raven Bay on the “Pacific side,” where he employed local people. He also had a fox farm in that bay (perhaps on Ogangen Island which fills a good part of Raven Bay). When absent from the village, people still had access to supplies as he turned his store over to a local man, often Jacob Denisoff, son of Nikifor Denisoff. Jacobsen also had his hand in prospecting. In 1933 the *Seward Gateway* reported that he and a partner, John Reinken, had filed a gold claim where they planned to strike it rich.⁹ Henry Swanson said it wasn’t gold; it was copper. “Maybe they thought they had gold, too,” he remarked. Buttressed by this anticipated fortune, Jacobsen announced that he was leaving Kashega and moving to Seattle or back to Norway. Three months later, however, the *Seward Gateway* quietly reported that he had “returned from Raven Bay to make his home in Kashega.”¹⁰ John Reinken arrived to spend the winter with him.



Kashega Village as seen from across the creek. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

Reinken was an articulate scallywag. Son of Adolph and Alexandra Reinken, he was raised at Kashega and Unalaska. In 1894 he was sent to Carlisle Indian School in Pennsylvania through the intervention of Sheldon Jackson, the commissioner of education for the territory. Returning to Unalaska, he did little except annoy his ill father who finally sent him away again.¹¹ Probably one of those individuals who was never completely accepted by either the Unangaḡ

8 Carter to Paul W. Gardner. September 8, 1933. NARA, RG 75. Letters Received.

9 The paper reported the claim was for Kallalach Bay, but this was probably a misprint for Kuliliak Bay.

10 *Seward Gateway*, September 15, 1933.

11 Leontiy Sivtsov to Jochelson, January 14/27, 1910, in Bergsland and Dirks, *Aleut Tales and Narratives*, 300-301.

or the white communities, Reinken drifted between jobs and schemes. He periodically found himself in trouble with the law, spent time in jail, escaped, and was known for a time as the only person to have hiked across the Shaler Mountains to Kashega. He was undoubtedly one of the “hoodlums” who plagued Arletta Carter.

In July 1933 a visiting officer aboard the *Tahoe* went into the store and found it “meagerly stocked.” He was unable to discover whether or not “additional supplies were expected before winter.”¹² This hardly mattered, as a matter of fact, because the winter’s supplies were generally ordered in bulk from Unalaska or Seattle.

Kashega’s population declined from 49 in 1920 to 33 in 1930 when there were five non-Natives, including Jacobson, the teachers (Hendersons) and two men connected to the sheep ranch. Population figures for the mid-1930s are somewhat difficult to trace, but in 1936 the population stood at 43.¹³ However, the decline in the number of school-aged children led to the closure of the school in 1935, and this, in turn, became another reason for two families to move to Unalaska.

Charles and Alice Moller took their daughter Mary to Unalaska about 1935 when Mary was five. They settled in the town and bought a home. He fished salmon in Bristol Bay each summer. “He has been one of the few fishermen who has always come in and paid up his account on his arrival from Bristol Bay each fall,” A.H. Proctor wrote to company headquarters. The company was experiencing competition from George and Victoria Gardner who ran a herring saltery for Alaska Salmon Company. If Moller chose to work in the herring industry, he would be unable to fish in Bristol Bay. “So far as we know now Charlie Miller [Moller] is the only one we are carrying [with a credit account] and who plans to fish for Gardner,” wrote Proctor.

There doubtless will be others and we will keep a sharp look-out and try to learn who they are but we feel that from this on until fishing actually opens such information will be hard to get.... If some means could be devised to drive a wedge into the production end here some good might come. Should we stop the credit of Miller [sic] we might create a feeling favorable to the Gardners

Alice Moller and her daughter Mary. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.



12 15 September 1933 report of the *Tahoe*. NARA RG 26, Cruise Reports, 1933 Season, Bering Sea Patrol Force.

13 H. D. Gray, “Population and Economics in the Aleutians.” SIA, RU 7176, box 13, folder 9.

and to that extent aid their plans. On the other hand should their plans fall through after the first shipment of fish the earnings of the people here would be adversely affected and we would have to take some losses in our credit outstandings among those who happened to be working for the Gardners.”¹⁴

The herring business at Unalaska was short-lived. It began in 1928, declined by 1932, and was virtually over by 1936.

When they moved to Unalaska, people from the three villages gravitated toward each other. Mary Diakanoff recalled that she never felt part of the larger Unalaska community. The Unalaska people spoke English more than *Unangam tunuu*, whereas the villagers were almost entirely Native speakers. Mary’s favorite babysitter was Yakim (Jack) Petikoff. He and his brother Matfey had moved to Unalaska from Makushin in 1940. Jack and Matfey were known respectively as Big Uncle and Little Uncle. Big Uncle would read Russian stories about Ivan Durak (“Ivan the Fool”) to Mary while babysitting her.¹⁵ When Jack and Matfey had visited Unalaska, before moving there permanently, they stayed with their sister Annie who was married to German Stepetin. Alfred, her son, welcomed their arrival as an opportunity to hear Jack’s stories. He recalled that the stories were not long, but the story-telling itself lasted late into the night.¹⁶

In June 1935, Alex Gordieff drowned when his skiff overturned in a large patch of kelp. His only relative was his ten-year old son, George.¹⁷ Alex’s wife Lucy had died a few years earlier. George eventually moved back to Kashega where he lived with the elderly John Denisoff. John, who visited his daughter Alice at Unalaska fairly regularly, may have encouraged George to return to the village. In any case, George divided his time between the village and the sheep ranch. Charles and Alice Moller returned to Kashega every so often to put up red salmon for the winter. John Denisoff would accompany them if he happened to be visiting Unalaska. On one trip that Mary Diakanoff remembered, they took the mailboat and the voyage lasted eighteen hours. At Kashega, Mary played with Polly Kudrin, daughter of Mike and Dora. When they were tired of being outside, they sometimes visited Mary’s great-uncle, Nikifor Denisoff because he had cocoa in his kitchen. “He was very old,” Mary recalled, and very relaxed. He’d sit in his chair and visit with the girls; and then Polly, who knew where the cocoa was kept, would go into the kitchen and make them each a cup.¹⁸

14 A.H. Proctor to Alaska Commercial Company, San Francisco. January 193[3]. Alaska Commercial Company Letters, Unalaska, Alaska, 1932-1934.

15 Mary Diakanoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, Unalaska, June 13, 2012. See *Kasakam Unikangis, Russian Stories Told in Atka Village*, (John Nevzoroff and Knut Bergsland), National Bilingual Materials Development Center, Rural Education Affairs, University of Alaska, Anchorage. 1978.

16 Stepetin, Alfred. January 21, 1988. Elders in Residence Program Collection. Oral History Collection of the Alaska and Polar Regions Department. Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

17 *Seward Gateway*, July 2, 1935.

18 Mary Diakanoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 22, 2012.

One morning Nikifor's wife walked into the kitchen and found him stirring a pot on the stove. He said he was cooking mush for breakfast and nodded at the counter. She saw a bright orange box with the black silhouette of the Fairbank's Gold Dust Twins. Her husband was boiling a pot of the latest innovation: powdered soap.¹⁹

Alan G. May wrote a detailed description of his trip to Kashega in August 1938.²⁰ He was a member of Aleš Hrdlička's Aleutian expedition. The men intended to hike overland to Kuliuliak Bay where they hoped to discover the location of an old and very large village site. However, they met Art Harris at Kashega. He worked for the sheep ranch and had been to Kuliliak Bay. He told them there "was very little there and it was not worth walking over to find out...."

He did, however, take them to see "an old Aleut." This may have been Nikifor Denisoff, certainly the oldest resident of the village.

Thru an interpreter we found out that there was a large cave on Grass Island nearby.... We went to Grass Island after leaving the village to look for the cave reported by the old Aleut. This was easily found for it was a large one and formed by the action of the sea—consequently of no use to us.

Hrdlička described the cave as "a large storm cavern with nothing in it." However, "high up in rocky cliffs to the left, about 30 feet from top,... [there was] a large black hole going deep in, promising, but unreachable without a long rope..."²¹

May counted 26 residents at Kashega. "The two houses I was in were quite clean," he wrote, "but not scrubbed to the point of shining like so many of the Russian Aleut houses. There is a nice little church of course. All the women had donned their best clothes for the occasion and some of them had put rouge on their cheeks."

Harris was an efficient manager. The next summer, the sheep ranch was reported to be employing many local people, although several men had gone to the Pribilof Islands to help with the seal harvest.²² The Kashega men arrived at St. Paul July 1, 1939. They included Keril Borenin, John Denisoff, Cornelius Kudrin, Mike E. Kudrin, Peter Kudrin, and Sergie Kudrin. These five, except for John Denisoff, returned the following year along with Mike J. Kudrin and Peter Yatchmenoff.

19 George Gordaoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, July 2, 2012.

20 Alan G. May papers (1902-1990) box 17, folder 16, 1938, page 115. Consortium Library, University of Alaska Anchorage, Archives and Special Collections, Consortium Library.

21 Hrdlička, *The Aleutian and Commander Islands*, 400-401.

22 Haas, R.B. "Sociological Report" August 21, 1939. NARA, RG 26, entry #292, file 611-601, box 60.

Eva Tcheripanoff's memories of Kashega are filled with the good times that children often remember.²³ She played and got into mischief. She carried around a doll made from a light-weight rock. Her uncle, Sophie's brother Vasilii, eventually tired of watching his niece dress and undress a rock and so he carved a wooden doll for her. He attached arms with rubber bands so they moved and Eva's mother glued yarn on for hair. Sophie also sewed clothes for the doll.



Eva and her Uncle Vasilii.
Photograph courtesy
Mary Diakanoff.

Sophie was skilled in traditional gut sewing and she made a small kamleika, the Unangaã raincoat, for Eva, along with a pair of skin shoes. Eva, however, got the shoes wet and, although she had been warned not to put them by the stove, she placed them under it where they hardened like stone. The next day she hid them from her mother who eventually discovered what had happened. "Maybe she was mad at me," Eva said, "but she didn't say nothing to me."

Eva wanted to be a hunter like her uncle and she would put on his Unangaã boots. They came up to her knees; and when she went to the beach, she could feel the rocks through the soles even though the shoes were lined with grass. She recalled that her grandmother (Olga Borenin) lived with "Old Man John," Mrs. Moller's father. When Eva stayed with her grandmother, they would take trips away from the village to collect firewood. It had to be brought back either in a skiff or by hand. Eva recalled carrying it on her back. Wood was a precious commodity, and there were times, even when it was rainy and cold, that people went without heat. "It was hard to get wood, you know," Eva said. "It was awful."



Olga Borenin and John
Denisoff. Photograph
courtesy Mary
Diakanoff.

Once Eva went down to the lake where kayaks (baidarkas) were stored upside down on the grass. She turned one over, pushed it into the water, and crawled inside. Before she knew it she was away from the shore. "And I was just hollering, hollering, you know," she said. "Finally somebody must have heard me. Must have been the Kudrin family heard me." Someone launched another kayak and brought her back to land.

She remembered that when she misbehaved her grandmother would spank her using a hard thong of whale muscle. "As soon as I spotted it," she laughed, "boy, I used to hide away!"²⁴ She added, "Even big people, grown up people, they used to spank."

²³ Eva Tcheripanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 50-89.

²⁴ Eva Tcheripanoff, Sophie Pletnikoff, and Ray Hudson, conversation recorded May 23, 1982.

They'd paddle them!" During this interview, her mother added, "Those old-time people were mean."

Eva had a pet cat that she carried around and treated like a puppy. "And he died!" she said. "And I buried him by the creek. Every morning I'd go down there and pray by it!" She laughed as she recalled those visits. "I'd pray by it. I think that helps me for my health," she said and laughed again.

Eva's uncle, Vasili, had one of the better homes at Kashega. Eva remembered it as a large house with an upstairs. He had crafted a tin sink for the kitchen and hooked up running water that was also used to operate a flush toilet. Vasili, however, fell ill and died before the evacuation. Like her mother, Eva worked for older residents of the village. She washed clothes for John Denisoff's wife and helped around the house. Once she tried making bread, but she forgot to add the sourdough starter and it never rose. John's wife used fresh seal oil and made fried-bread from the dough.

There were few children in the village. Eva's closest friend was Tatiana Nevzoroff who was from Atka. She eventually married Peter Kudrin. George Borenin



Four Kashega women (left to right): Sophie Kudrin, Oleta Borenin, Eva Kudrin (in front), Tatiana Kudrin. Alice Moller Collection, photograph courtesy AB Rankin.



Left to right: George Gordaoff, Tatiana Nevzoroff, and Eva Kudrin on horse. Photograph courtesy Roberta Gordaoff.

Verso of photograph reads: "George I. A. Gordaiff [Gordaoff] 12 yrs Bad Boy, Miss Tatitona E. D. Nezoroff [Tatiana Nevzoroff], Miss Eva S. A. Kudrin. Kashega, Alaska."

made a pair of walkie-talkies for the girls, stringing two cans together. One evening Eva was playing with them by herself.

"What are you doing?" George asked.

"I'm playing radio," she answered.

"Poor thing," George said to Sophie in *Unangam tunuu*, adding that he wished he could buy Eva a real radio, "but he's got no place to buy a radio from." Years later, after the war and the evacuation, when he was the last resident of Kashega, George would have his own large radio to communicate with the outside world. But in the late 1930s, that world was far away.



Old and new cross at the site of the former chapel at Makushin, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Josy Shangin.

Chapter 14

The Agony of Makushin



After she arrived at Unalaska for medical treatment in the fall of 1935, Annie Olsen informed authorities that Pete Olsen had been molesting her for five years. She was seventeen. Tatiana Olsen corroborated her adopted daughter's affidavit and on September 6, 1935, Olsen was brought to Unalaska by the U.S. deputy marshal on a charge of rape. When the women appeared in court, however, they reversed their testimony, and the case against him was dismissed for insufficient evidence. Court officials considered conducting an investigation to determine if the women had perjured themselves. Annie returned to Makushin with her mother and, less than a year later, on June 19, 1936, she died at the age of eighteen. She was buried near the church. "What there was done to me in Sept. 1935," Olsen wrote bitterly five years later, referring to those who had instigated and pursued the case, "is not forgotten and never will be."¹

By the mid-1930s, Elia Borenin had been selected as village chief. Akenfa Galaktionoff was second chief.² Men continued traveling to the Pribilof Islands each June to work in the seal harvest. This meant that Olsen had to shear his sheep earlier than he might have wished. He confessed to the manager of the sheep ranch at Chernofski that he wasn't much of sheep man. Nevertheless, he steadily increased the size of his herd, ran more fencing and experimented with local and imported grass for feed. He traded rams and ewes with the much larger ranch at Chernofski.

One June day in 1932, while the men were away to the Pribilofs, a group of women took a dory out to an islet to collect sea gull eggs.³ Among the women

1 P. J. Olsen to Verne Robinson, October 23, 1940, courtesy of Marti Murray.

2 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 138.

3 Commander, Bering Sea Patrol, to Commandant. December 3, 1932. NARA, 611 Bering Sea 1931-32. RG 26, file 611, box 1864.

was one of Peter Petikoff's daughters, Oleanna. In Nick Galaktionoff's description of subsequent events, the women anchored on one side of the islet and set about gathering eggs. When they were ready to return, Oleanna was missing. After searching the island, they took the dory to the opposite side where they found her floating below the surface. They recovered the body and returned home.

"Why did they bury her?" young Nick asked his grandmother. The girl had often played with him. "That was the first time I saw a dead person," Nick said. "I didn't cry, however, but when they started to bury her I began crying and couldn't stop.... My mom said that she had passed away. She spoke in Aleut, but I didn't understand even then. To me it looked like she was sleeping."⁴

"I have heard that 'Pete Olsen would just as soon shoot you as look at you,'" wrote Arletta Carter, the teacher at Kashega and one of his rare admirers. "There are other stories circulating that Pete Olsen is cruel to his Natives; that he beats them and abuses them." She wrote that he was suspected in the death of a girl who "fell" off a bluff near the village in 1932, but when the Coast Guard arrived to investigate he proved he had been "two miles away reading a book."⁵

In August 1936 John Corston, a postal clerk aboard the S.S. *Starr*, arrived to resolve a dispute over the handling of mail that had arisen between residents of the village and Olsen whom the captain of the *Starr* said was "known widely as the King of Makushin." Corston's solution was to tie the mail sacks with knots so secure they could not be opened surreptitiously. His description of Olsen is ominous and dark, depicting a man isolated by language, grief, and culture. He described him as a "very large fully bearded specimen of a Russian promishlenik, or maybe a baidarschik (a captain of a baidara fleet)" who first drank "all the liquor in sight in the captain's cabin" and then three bottles of Corston's own beer, "talking steadily for two hours in the deep silence of the sleeping ship about the old, good days at Makushin village...." Eventually, he sought out the skiff tied alongside the ship "with two patient retainers waiting for him to get his fill. They knew their king."⁶

In 1936 Makushin had forty-four residents (12 men, nine women, and 23 children).⁷ Within a year that number would be cut in half. In the spring of 1937, Simeon Lekanoff had the audacity to sell a gas generator to John Yatchmeneff of Unalaska. There was already bad blood between Yatchmeneff and Olsen and the storekeeper was furious with Simeon and refused to sell him groceries, telling him he could get them from Yatchmeneff. Lekanoff, a well-built individual—"pretty

4 Nick Galaktionoff, recording 1977. See also Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 32.

5 Arletta Carter to Paul Gordon, Office of Indian Affairs, September 5, 1933. NARA, RG 75.

6 Corson, *Alaska to the Rhine*, 96, courtesy of Chris Wooley.

7 Mitcherl, R.J., Ass't Surgeon U.S.C.G. Cutter *Daphne*, to Commander Bering Sea Patrol Force. 4 Sept. 1936. NARA, Pacific Alaska Region. RG 26 U.S. Coast Guard. Records of the Bering Sea Patrol 1926-1940 (1936). Box 43

husky man, that guy” was how Nick Galaktionoff remembered his grandfather—was not easily intimidated.⁸ “Okay,” he told Olsen, “I will.” Moses Galanin happened to be visiting from St. George, and Simeon used him as an interpreter to arrange passage for himself and his family aboard the mailboat to Unalaska.⁹ This family of eight was the largest at Makushin and their exodus was a serious blow.¹⁰ Arriving at Unalaska, they stayed with their uncle, Andrew Galaktionoff, until Simeon’s son Nick located a small house that his father purchased from George and Victoria Gardner. The Gardners made a business of buying abandoned buildings, fixing them up, and selling them. Andrew served the Church of the Holy Ascension in various capacities, and Nick began assisting him and Father Theodosius. When the priest was transferred to St. George about a year later, Nick had learned enough to become an alter boy for Bishop Alexei, the former Alexander Panteleev, who spent months working out of his old parish.

The gradual arrival of Makushin residents at Unalaska was reflected by purchases made on credit at the AC Company where the agent frequently noted purchasers’ home villages. In 1936 Arthur Lekanoff, an older son of Simeon Lekanoff, was shown as a Makushin resident for the last time. Beginning in April 1937 there were steady purchases made by Philip and Frank Galaktionoff and by Simeon and Nick Lekanoff. Another of Simeon’s adult sons, Constantine, also arrived. They were joined in 1940 by Jack (Yakim) and Matfey Petikoff. Whoever kept company records in 1940 was especially careful to record the home villages of people with lines of credit. He noted three men from Biorka and one from Kashaga in addition to men from Akutan, Belkovski, Umnak (Nikolski), St. George, Atka, King Cove, and St. Paul. None of the seven Makushin men who made purchases were listed as residing in their home village. It is significant that no purchases were recorded for Elia Borenin who remained at Makushin.¹¹

Akenfa Galaktionoff took his twelve-year-old son Nick fishing on Makushin Bay in April 1937. They were startled when a walrus surfaced near the dory. As his father pulled for the beach, Nick noticed that one of the tusks was broken near its point. Akenfa shot at the creature and before long the sea was colored red. A day or two later the walrus appeared outside the village and was shot at again. Walrus are rare in the Aleutians, but not unknown. In September 1938 Olsen told Victor B. Scheffer that in the late fall of 1926 or 1927 he was in Anderson Bay in his power dory and towed a walrus onto the beach that had been killed by local men.¹²

8 Nick Galaktionoff, recording 1977. An edited version of this recording is found in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 25-33.

9 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 101. This was also confirmed by Nick Galaktionoff, *ibid.* 140.

10 The family consisted of Simeon, his wife Okalena, and children Nicholai, Arthur, Timothy, Steven, Vassa, and Stepinida.

11 Credit Sales Journal, 1936, 1937, 1939, 1940, Alaska Commercial Company Records, JL006. J. Hugh Jackson Library, Stanford.

12 Scheffer, Victor B. Report on Observations in the Aleutian Islands, August – September 1938. SIA RU7176, box 18, folder 13.

Holy Thursday, commemorating the Last Supper, the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, and the betrayal of Christ by Judas, fell on April 22 in 1937.¹³ The day broke calm and clear. Matfey Borenin, Akenfa Galaktionoff and his half-brother John Borenin left the village about eight in the morning in a 14-½ foot dory borrowed from Pete Olsen. It was equipped with three pairs of oars. Planning to collect driftwood and to fish for cod, they took enough food for the day, including three loaves of bread. Each man had a rifle and Akenfa also brought his shotgun. They headed in the direction of West End and north along the coast toward Volcano Bay.¹⁴

Elia Borenin spent the day repairing the fence that kept Olsen's herd of sheep from straying. Marva Borenin took Nick and a few others for a walk into the hills. Back in the village early in the afternoon, Nick fished for pogies from shore. When he returned to his grandmother's house, he told her he had heard gunfire in the distance, adding, "Maybe my dad is coming back."

But no one returned. The evening was calm. The sky grew dark. The women were nervous because the only men left in the village were Elia and Pete Olsen. "And Pete Olsen never help anybody anyway," Nick said.

"Everything is all right," Marva Borenin told her grandson. "Go to bed." The next morning, the men were still not back. Nick played outside, but every time he went home he asked about his dad and the answer was always the same. He could tell from his grandmother's voice that she had grown concerned. "And dark comes again," Nick said. "It came fast."

The third day, the wives of the three men went out with Elia Borenin. According to his own testimony, Pete Olsen went with them. A gale had come up out of the northwest and a big sea was running. They returned in the evening having found pieces of the dory and three oars along the beach. They carried a four-foot section of the boat back to the village where it was examined. A bullet hole was found, apparently made by a 30/30 and entering from the outside at a 45-degree angle.

"Still," Nick said, "we have hope that they're going to come home." But every time he saw his dad's clothes or belongings, he would start crying and Marva would tell him not to cry. The next day Elia Borenin scoured the beach alone almost as far as Volcano Bay. That afternoon Nick kept his eyes on the trail from the old village, and for a moment he thought he saw three people approaching. He and other kids ran out but it was only Elia.

13 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 91. The date the men left Makushin has been given as April 23 (report of William Brown) or April 24 (U.S. Coast Guard investigations), a Friday or Saturday. Nick dated the event by relating it to the church calendar. April 23 is unlikely because of Good Friday church services.

14 Unless otherwise noted, this account is based on interviews with Nick Lekanoff and Nick Galaktionoff.

“He didn’t tell us nothing,” Nick said, “’cause we’re kids.”

The search continued for a week. Elia recovered about three-fourths of the wrecked dory, a cod fishing line, and about ten 30/30 cartridges in a bag tied to part of the frame. Pete Olsen sent word to Unalaska on the mailboat and William C. Brown, the deputy U.S. marshal, arrived on a Coast Guard vessel to investigate. Brown’s mother was Unangaġ and he spoke the language. Elia told the marshal “that he firmly believes that the three men had met their end by being attacked by the same wounded Walrus” that had been seen off the village.¹⁵

Despite Elia’s conclusion, two other theories about the disappearance persisted. The first was that they had fallen victims to intruding Japanese fishermen. Nick Galaktionoff expressed this belief a number of times. The second explanation centered on Pete Olsen himself when it was learned that two of the men were scheduled to testify against him at an upcoming court appearance. Lieutenant C. F. Edge of the Coast Guard Cutter *Spencer* suggested that Olsen be kept under observation “with a view of ending his reputedly illegal activities, or of bringing him to justice.”

He is supposed to have illegal interests in fox raising rights on Ogliuga and Skagul Islands. It is stated that natives are leaving the vicinity of Makushin because they are being driven off by Olsen. He was recently convicted of illegal possession of firearms, the Collector of Customs at Dutch Harbor, Mr. Durrell Finch, acting as attorney in his defense. His fine is believed to have been paid by the agent of the Alaska Commercial Company at Dutch Harbor. Prior to his trial, three natives, two of whom were to have appeared against him at his trial, were reported missing in a small boat. Olsen is said to have gone out to look for them, and on his return reported that he had found the remains of their boat, showing evidence of having been attacked and crushed by a walrus. Other persons reported subsequently that they had discovered the boat, stove in, and with a rifle bullet hole through the side.¹⁶

Henry Swanson’s comments are relevant. “The man did good for the village,” he said, “but he also did a lot of bad. He was known to have a bad character and to be awful mean.”¹⁷ Swanson said the three men had “just got around a pinnacle point—a kind of Priest Rock—going towards Volcano Bay.

Olsen was up on the hill above them. In those days they had lights up

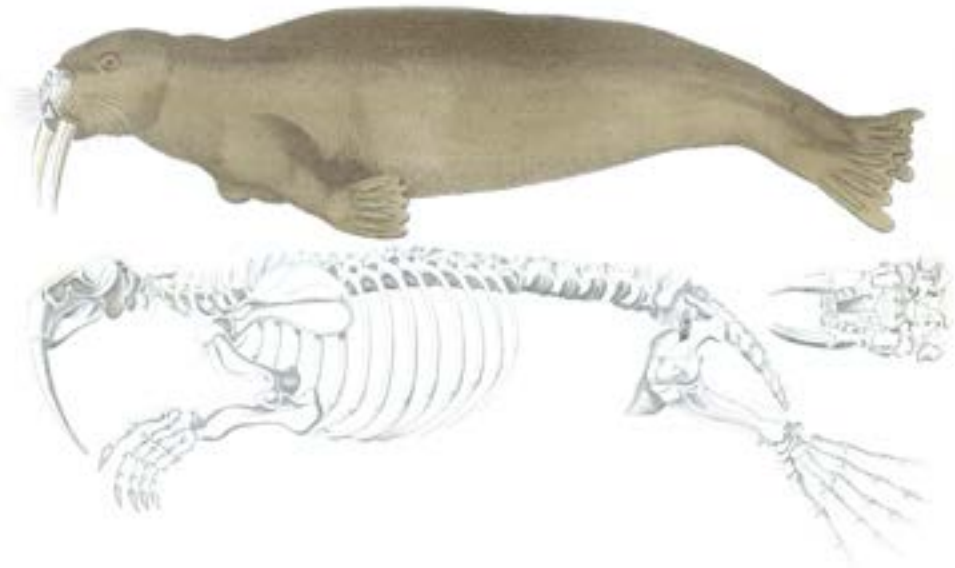
15 Brown, W.C., “Report concerning triple drowning and conditions as observed...., May 26, 1937.” NARA, Pacific Alaska Region. RG 26, file 611, box 48. Records of the Bering Sea Patrol 1926-1940. File: 611, 64, 6641. Cooperation with other departments, passengers & guests. BSPF 1937, 1 of 2.

16 C.F. Edge, to Commandant. 26 August 1937 NARA RG 26, box 611. Bering Sea Patrol General Correspondence, 1936.

17 Swanson, “More on Makushin,” Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 34.

on the hills for markers. There was one at Makushin for the mailboats and one at Chernofski and Umnak. These were coal-oil or kerosene lamps, and once every couple of weeks someone from the village would have to go and refill them. The wick might need trimming or the chimney need cleaning. Well, Pete Olsen was up on the hill where this light was and he said he saw what happened. All those fellows disappeared. They never did find their bodies. Pete Olsen said they were attacked by a bunch of walruses!¹⁸

Illustration of walrus and walrus skeleton. From *Natural History for all Social Ranks*. Artist: Lorenz Oken, Stuttgart, Germany circa mid-1800s. Image courtesy Francis Broderick.



The mystery of the disappearance will never be solved. Three women were widowed and 13 children were left without fathers. Akenfa's wife, Parascovia, had seven children. Natalia Borenin, Matfey's wife, was pregnant and had five children. Tina (Valentine) Borenin, John Borenin's young wife, had an infant and she also was pregnant.¹⁹ According to information supplied by Pete Olsen, she was from St. Paul Island where her father and two brothers lived.²⁰ In addition, Marva Borenin, the mother-in-law of Parascovia and Tina, had been dependent on her sons. In the weeks following his father's disappearance, Nick would go down to the beach and sit. If he had a candy bar he would eat half of it and throw the other half into the water for his dad. "Pretty hard to get over it," he said almost seventy years later. "He used to teach me. Goddamn, he used to read Aleut books."²¹

The deaths had happened at the end of winter, at a time when any money earned from work in the Pribilof Islands the previous summer would have been long

18 Swanson, "More on Makushin," Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 34.

19 The Galaktionoff children were Melania "Molly," Nicholai, Peter, Evadokia "Eva," Marina Irene, Oleta Julia, and Paul Akenfer. Natalia Borenin's children were Nicholai, Eva, Sammy, Akinfa Matfey, and Matrona. Her son John Matfey had been adopted by the Olsens. The name of Tina Borenin's infant is unknown, but in January 1940 she had a two year old son Ignaty Borenin.

20 Brown, W.C., "Report concerning triple drowning and conditions as observed...., May 26, 1937."

21 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 137.

spent. Men needed to fish and hunt to put food on the tables. Pete and Tatiana Olsen provided the three families with canned food from their store for about a month, but by May 27 they had cut off credit.²² In early June Father Theodosius Kulchitsky arrived aboard the Coast Guard cutter *Ingham* to “investigate condition of those reported destitute due to man-killing walrus.” The Coast Guard issued emergency provisions to the three women: 90 pounds of potatoes, 75 of biscuits, 150 of flour, 60 of rice, sugar, and dried lima beans, 15 pounds of tea, and 2 cases of canned milk, a total value of \$33.74.²³ By July 20, Olsen had departed for a trip to the Lower 48, leaving Tatiana in charge of his store and sheep ranch. A brief sentence written July 21, 1937, by Noble G. Ricketts, commanding the Coast Guard Cutter *Tallapoosa*, dates the departure of two of the widows and Marva Borenin: “Left Makushin, having received aboard 12 destitute native women and children with their belongings for transportation to Unalaska.”²⁴ Nick brought one toy: a small inflatable dory that he had received for Christmas. He had that boat, patched and patched again, for a long time. Natalia Borenin chose to remain at Makushin with her five children under the care of her brother-in-law, Elia Borenin.



Henry Swanson, July 26, 1966. Photograph courtesy Francis Broderick.

22 A.J. Carpenter, Commanding Officer *Morris*, to Commander Bering Sea Patrol Force. May 17, 1937. NARA, Box 611, Bering Sea Patrol General Correspondence 1937, 611-601.

23 NARA. RG 26. U.S. Revenue Cutter logs. *Ingham* 1937. M.J. Ryan, Cmdr. 2-3 June 1937.

24 N. G. Ricketts, *Diary*, July 20, 1937. Copy in possession of Ray Hudson.

Ricketts moored the *Tallapoosa* at Dutch Harbor at 1:30 on the afternoon of July 21 and the Makushin people were taken ashore in a launch with Makarii Zaochney of Atka who had been working as a guide for the anthropologist Aleš Hrdlička.²⁵ The buildings looked very tall to young Nick. Pariscovia Galaktionoff and her children stayed first in an extra house that Sergie Shaishnikoff owned. Later they lived with Mike Borenin and then with Bill Dyakanoff and his family. Eventually, she was able to get a small house of her own.

The deaths of the three men ended Makushin as a viable village. Art Harris, the sheep rancher at Kashega, wrote in March 1938 that only one Native family was left.²⁶ Even so, a coast guard report in May 1939 suggested the village was flourishing under Olsen's guidance.

The natives earn their livelihood by working at St. Paul Island, about 2 ½ to 3 months of the year during which they earn approximately \$175 each. This is supplemented by local trapping on a small scale.... Olsen maintains a small store in which he stocks supplies and a limited amount of food stuff which he sells to the natives.

The natives of this village apparently live more after the form of the traditional way of the natives before the coming of the whites, that is, they eat very little canned foods, in fact there is none stocked in the local store, but subsist on mutton grown on the island, sea lions, seals, fish, clams, etc., which they take for their own use. It is believed that Olsen is responsible for these habits of the natives, and he boasts that they are better off than any other natives in the islands.²⁷

A more realistic summary came from a doctor aboard the *Itasca* in August who found only two elderly women and three children subsisting on canned goods and fish they caught using a small dory. Any men were away working elsewhere. "The white man who had been looking after the village was expected to return when the canning season had ended."²⁸

"The village, once thriving, is about to die out," wrote E.S. Endom, the executive officer on the Coast Guard cutter *Shoshone* in July 1940. He described a village where houses far outnumbered families. The report suggests that whomever he spoke with expected the return of some of the people who had left. Endom was confused, to say the least, and erroneously concluded that Makushin was inhabited only during the summer months.

There are only 9 people (native) living regularly in the village—4 males and 5 females. At the time of our visit 3 males were away from the

25 N.G. Ricketts to Commander Bering Sea Patrol, 3 August 1937. NARA. RG 26. Box 611, Bering Sea Patrol 1936, General 1215.

26 Art Harris to Bob Kranich, March 26, 1938, courtesy of Ray Kranich and Cora Holmes.

27 *Hermes*. Allen Winbeck. NARA, RG 26 611, Box 611-601 Hamilton to 611-601 Shoshone.

28 R.B. Haas, *Itasca* August 29, 1939. RG 26 611, Box 611-601 Hamilton to 611-601 Shoshone.

village working at St. Paul Island. A white man, Mr. Olsen, lives at this village with his native wife and son, and appears to look after the well-being of the natives to a certain extent. A Russian Catholic Church is located in the village, but there is no Priest. Water is piped to several houses in the village and the rest of them carry their water from a stream, which is only a short distance away. Mr. Olsen has installed a hydro-electric power plant at a nearby waterfall and provides the village with electricity.

All dwellings are frame houses of the usual type occupied by the natives in the Aleutian chain. However, Mr. Olsen's house is modern. No radio facilities are available for communication with the outside at this time, but Mr. Olsen appeared very interested in radio. No school facilities are provided.

The village is supported by the usual hunting and fishing, and the men go to St. Paul Island to work during the summer months. Mr. Olsen has a few hundred head of sheep, which provide some employment to the natives. Many old bones and relics are found near the village. The FERN calls about once a month, bringing mail and supplies, and picks up any freight which they may have for market.

The village is inhabited only during the summer, which accounts for the fact that no provisions are made for a school.²⁹

The government logbook for St. Paul identified Elia Borenin and his sixteen-year-old nephew Nick as the only temporary workers from Makushin in 1939 and 1940.³⁰ At the end of October 1941, Pete Olsen wrote a long letter to Don Green at Chernofski related to his sheep business. He had built a new winter pasture and planned moving sheep into it the middle of November. The pasture was situated so that he could corral the animals when severe weather arose and bring them closer to the village where he kept hay in the barn. He confessed that he was inexperienced with sheep but he thought the venture was looking up.

Regards the sheeps they is better this year and i ever have seing them, the lams is just as big as there mothers. The increase is not so big as it should be, i have to kil of quit a bunch every year to get what i need, if it was not for that i would a fine little bunch right now And this year I got 43 cents a pound for the wool best i ever got, only truble i did not have any more to sale

29 Endom, E.S. "Sociological Report, Makushin, Alaska" 16 July 1940. NARA, Pacific Alaska Region. RG 26 U.S. Coast Guard. Records of the Bering Sea Patrol 1926-1940 (1940). 495-800 (messages) File: Sociological-Census.

30 Official Logs, St. Paul Island, Alaska, 1939 and 1940. Department of the Interior. Bureau of Commercial Fisheries. June 26, 1940.

He mentioned his adopted son, John, and “the few natives” still at Makushin.

i dont know if you saw my boy on the Fern he is man now hi do most of the work for me and the few natives there is left here helps mi, i cant do much my back is on the bum. I pay the natives back in meat and they sure can eat mutton....There is no news³¹

Makushin’s misfortunes were inexorably tied to Pete Olsen. His house at Unalaska, frequently uninhabited, was a popular target for vandalism. He suspected village children were responsible, but marshal Bill Brown refused to take action unless Olsen swore out a warrant. In 1939 Verne Robinson arrived as the new deputy U.S. marshal. Olsen wrote to him. Robinson investigated and suggested he rent the property to keep it safe. Robinson’s attention to this long-running problem produced a remarkable letter from Olsen in October 1940.³² Fragmented, inarticulate, and rambling—not unlike the description of Olsen’s two-hour monologue aboard the *Starr* in 1936—the letter accused people of theft, rape, threatening murder, and murder itself. He had been lied to by the U.S. commissioner and by Natives, denied the right to call witnesses when accused, and jailed when he attempted to protect the little that was his. Maligned, isolated from people in power and excluded from the close-knit Native community, he had been “blamed for everything from murder” on down although not one of the accusations would hold water. Those people who had left Makushin had been “a bunch of dam dyvles [devils]” but they were gone and he was still there and would remain until he was ready to move out. But not now. He remained defiant.

“And I could tell you Mr. Robinson a whole lot more if I wanted to,” he wrote. What people had done to him, they had done to others. “They can have that fun for a little while longer,” he wrote. “Their times are getting shorter.”

Time was closing in on everyone.

31 Pete Olsen to Don Green, October 30, 1941, courtesy of Cora Holmes and Ray Kranich.

32 P. J. Olsen to Verne Robinson, October 23, 1940, courtesy of Marti Murray.



Ugadaga Bay. Photograph by Ray Hudson.

Chapter 15

The Approach of War



As the story of Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega enters the war years, there were so few residents that it is possible to describe the communities in detail without overwhelming confusion. The events at Makushin had decimated the village. When the federal census was taken May 14, 1940, only two households were left. Pete and Tatiana Olsen lived with their thirteen-year-old adopted son John. Elia and Eva Borenin's home included Natalia Borenin and her four children: Nick, Eva, Akenfa, and Matrona—although Nick, then sixteen, was listed as the adopted son of Elia and Eva. Nick's sister Eva was thirteen while Akenfa and Matrona were six and two.¹ On October 20, 1941, Natalia Borenin died from tuberculosis.

Makushin Households in 1940 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1940)

J.P.H [John Peter Halberg "Pete"] Olsen, age 58 (head of household)

Katie [Tatiana] Olsen, age 43 (wife of Pete Olsen)

John Olsen, age 13 (adoptive son of Peter and Katie Olsen)

Elia Borenin, age 46 (head of household)

Eva Borenin, age 51 (wife of Elia Borenin)

Nick Borenin, age 16 (adoptive son of Elia and Eva Borenin)

Natalia Borenin, age 35 (sister-in-law of Elia Borenin)

Eva Borenin, age 13 (niece of Elia Borenin)

Akenfa Borenin, age 9 (nephew of Elia Borenin)

Matrona Borenin, age 2 (niece of Elia Borenin)

The seven families in Kashega, on the other hand, were doing well. The twenty-six residents included Sophie Kudrin and her eleven-year-old daughter Eva who were living with her brother-in-law George Borenin. Mike and Dora Kudrin lived with their three daughters: Polly, Vassa, and Alice Esther. Mike's brother Cornelius had a twenty-year-old lodger at his home, Sergie Borenin. The chief of

¹ Natalia's son Sammy had eaten poison and died at the age of five the previous year.

the village, John Denisoff, was getting up in years. He was 69. Staying with him was fourteen-year-old George Gordaoff.² John was in failing health and spent time with his daughter Alice who had moved to Unalaska with her husband and daughter. Carl and Eva Borenin had a three-year-old daughter. The widow Efemia Kudrin had the largest family that included four adults and two teenaged children. The patriarch of the village was the old sea otter hunter Nikefor Denisoff, whose age was given as 77 in 1940 but who might have been even older. Peter and Nellie Yatchmenoff and their young daughter were living with him.



Three Borenin sisters:
Left to right: Oleta,
Dora, and Sophia.
Photograph courtesy
Mary Diakanoff.

Biorka had four families in 1940. The chief was Alex Ermeloff, and his household reflected the diverse nature of this village. In addition to himself, it included his son Ruff and Ruff's wife Agafia, an adult daughter (Sophia, 35), an adult adopted son (Akenfa, 27), and a ten-year old adopted daughter (Irene Lukanin). Two years younger than Alex Ermeloff, Andrew Makarin was now 52. He and Eustina were raising their adopted daughter, Irene. Fourteen-year-old Nick Galaktionoff, having temporarily escaped Unalaska, was living with them. George and Elsie Yatchmenoff's family included three children: William, 17; Feodor, 5; and Marianna, 4. Peter and Molly Lukanin with their infant son Moses comprised the youngest family in the village. Molly had been a Galaktionoff from Makushin, and her younger siblings, Peter and Marina Galaktionoff, were living with them along with her mother and stepfather, Parascovia and Innokentii Borenin. Parascovia (Polly) had married Innokentii Borenin in April 1938.

Nothing has been said so far about Andrew Makarin's younger brother Elia. Born in 1892, he grew up at Biorka and became a hunter, trapper, and fisherman. Around 1914 or 1915 he married Agrafina Petikoff from Akutan. They eventually had six children, and, sometime after 1930, established a home at Unalaska that served as a base for visiting Biorka people. As more and more people from the three villages were drawn to Unalaska, housing for visitors and new residents became critical. Unanga who had lived at Unalaska for generations were physically unable to absorb the new arrivals as most houses were small. In addition, as Mary Diakanoff has pointed out, many Unalaska Unanga saw themselves as culturally distinct from villagers, better educated, better able to deal with the increasingly bureaucratic nature of business and politics. The importance

2 The census report calls him George Denisoff, John's adopted son.

of homes like the one established by Elia and Agrafina Makarin cannot be overestimated.

Kashega Households in 1940 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1940)

George Borenin, age 40 (head of household)
Sophia Kudrin, age 31 (sister-in-law of George Borenin)
Eva Kudrin [Tcheripanoff], age 11 (niece of George Borenin)

Mike Kudrin, age 35 (head of household)
Dora Kudrin, age 24 (wife of Mike Kudrin)
Polly Kudrin, age 7 (daughter of Mike and Dora Kudrin)
Vasa [Vassa] Kudrin, age 3 (daughter of Mike and Dora Kudrin)
Alice Esther, age 2 months (daughter of Mike and Dora Kudrin)

John Denisoff, age 69 (head of household and acting chief after death of John Yatchmenoff)
George Denisoff [Gordaoff], age 15 (adopted son of John Denisoff)

Carl Borenin, age 39 (head of household)
Eva Borenin, age 24 (wife of Carl Borenin)
Mary Borenin, age 3 (daughter of Carl and Eva Borenin)

Nikifor Densioff, age 77 (head of household)
Peter Yatchmenoff, age 34 (lodger of Nikifor Densioff)
Nellie Yatchmenoff, age 24 (wife of lodger, Peter Yatchmenoff)
Laura Yatchmenoff, age 2 (daughter of lodgers, Peter and Nellie Yatchmenoff)

Efemia Kudrin, age 53 (head of household since husband, John Kudrin died)
Peter Kudrin, age 28 (son of Efemia Kudrin)
Mike Kudrin, age 25 (son of Efemia Kudrin)
Olga Kudrin, age 22 (daughter of Efemia Kudrin)
Sergi [Sergie] Kudrin, age 20 (son of Efemia Kudrin)
George Kudrin, age 15 (son of Efemia Kudrin)
Tatiana Kudrin, age 18 (daughter-in-law of Efemia Kudrin and wife of Peter Kudrin)

Cornelius E. Kudrin, age 41 (head of household)
Serge[Sergie] Borenian [Borenin], age 20 (lodger of Cornelius Kudrin)

Biorka Households in 1940 (U.S. Bureau of the Census 1940)

Alex Yermenof [Ermeloff], age 54 (head of household)
Reus [Ruff] Yermenoff [Ermeloff], age 31 (son of Alex Ermeloff)
Akenfa Yermenoff [Ermeloff], age 27 (adoptive son of Alex Ermeloff)
Agafia Yermenoff [Ermeloff], age 19 (daughter-in-law of Alex Ermeloff and wife of Ruff)
Sophia Yermenoff [Ermeloff], age 35 (daughter of Alex Ermeloff)
Irene Lokanin [Ermeloff], age 10 (adoptive daughter of Alex Ermeloff)

George Yatchmenoff, age 46 (head of household)
Aprensia [Elsie] Yatchmenoff, age 29 (wife of George Yatchmenoff)
William [Willie] Yatchmenoff, age 17 (son of George Yatchmenoff)
Fedor Yatchmenoff, age 5 (son of George Yatchmenoff)
Marianna Yatchmenoff, age 4 (daughter of George Yatchmenoff)

Peter Lokanin [Lukanin], age 24 (head of household)
Molly Galaktionoff (Lukanin), age 19 (wife of Peter Lukanin; originally from Makushin)
Moses Lukanin, age 1 month (son of Peter and Molly Lukanin)
Peter Galaktionoff, age 10 (lodger of Peter Lukanin; sibling of Molly Galaktionoff)
Irene Galaktionoff, age 6 (lodger of Peter Lukanin; sibling of Molly Galaktionoff)
Inokenti Borenin, age 36 (lodger of Peter Lukanin; father of Molly Galaktionoff)

Andrew Makarin, age 52 (head of household)
Estenia [Eustina or Esther] Makarin, age 48 (wife of Andrew Makarin)
Nick Galaktionoff, age 14 (lodger of Andrew Makarin; moved from Unalaska)
Erenin Borenin [Irene Makarin], age 8 (listed as lodger of Andrew Makarin; adopted daughter)

Because Unalaska was the magnet for people living in the outer villages, it is important to understand the type of community it had become. “This was a fairly quiet and respectable camp till the Alaska Dry Law was repealed a year ago,” wrote U.S. commissioner Durrell Finch in 1935. “Now it is one of the toughest towns in all of Alaska...[where] every business place [is] just like a water-front saloon.”³ After Alaskan voters had approved banning alcohol in 1916, the measure had gone to the

U.S. Congress for ratification. The so-called “Bone Dry Law” went into effect in 1918, two years before prohibition became national policy, and ended only with the repeal of the 18th amendment in 1933.

When Nick Galaktionoff arrived at Unalaska in 1937 he discovered dogs and drunks. “I didn’t like dogs, and there were too many people,” he said. There had been only two well-trained sheep dogs at Makushin. “I saw people staggering sideways,” he said. “I had never seen them do that before.... In Makushin my dad never drank.”⁴ Alcoholism began to infiltrate the lives of new arrivals just as it had enveloped several local residents. Both Parascovia (Polly) and Innokentii Borenin were in jail on alcohol related charges when the 1940 census was taken—with Innokentii having been sentenced to five additional days for talking with one of the women prisoners, probably his wife. Nick himself spoke openly about his long struggle with alcohol that lasted into his fifties.

At Unalaska outsiders were installed in every position of authority except village chief. Traditional Unanga found themselves relegated to manual laborers. For decades even “traditional” jobs such as sea otter hunting and fox trapping had been controlled by white men who either owned vessels or had access to markets. They alone held jobs in government, commerce, education, and regulatory enforcement. Deputy U.S. commissioners were always outsiders as were game wardens, medical staff, store owners, and (except for



Peter Galaktionoff.
Photo courtesy Jennie
Lekanoff.

3 Durrell Finch to Dear Nephew Gerald, Unalaska, April 4, 1935. Marine Works Collection, Museum of the Aleutians, 1998.001.432.

4 Nick Galaktionoff in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 33.

Bill Brown) deputy U.S. marshals. With brief exceptions, this was also true of teachers and postmasters.⁵ If Unangâ worked in these areas, they were janitors at the school, nurse assistants at the hospital, clerks at the stores. The better paying positions not only provided a guaranteed income, but in several instances they were part-time jobs that allowed the non-Native office holders to spend considerable energy in private economic ventures and in warring with each other. During a visit in 1936, Olaus Murie, working for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, noted in his diary, “Am learning much about the intrigues and shady side of life here. Not pleasant to think about. All over commercial greed.”⁶

Few Unangâ were able to move up the economic ladder. Women who married white men may have seen an improvement in their standard of living. However, if their children excelled, this was credited to the father’s “white” blood, not to anything the mother brought to the family. Bill Brown’s wife, though Bill was Unangâ on his mother’s side, would not allow their children to associate with village children.⁷ Unangâ who integrated into the general white community were those with enough Scandinavian, Germanic, or Russian ancestry so as to literally pass for white. Victoria Gardner, for example, thought Henry Swanson was a Scandinavian fisherman. Economic barriers mirrored other discriminatory practices. Seating at the movie theater was by race, with better seats reserved for whites. If a non-Native woman welcomed an Unangâ visitor into her home—even the chief—she faced disapproval from other whites.⁸

Unangâ at Unalaska, whether long-time residents or new arrivals, found themselves in situations similar to people who emigrated from villages into cities such as Anchorage or Fairbanks. Dorothy Jones, examining the catastrophic consequences of ineffective social service agencies in the 1970s, wrote how urban immigrants faced “several stressful transitions simultaneously.”

...from rural to urban, from one culture to another, and from one set of class and racial definitions to another as they learn that poverty and minority racial status are stigmatized in the white-dominated urban setting far more than in the villages. The urban transition of Natives is accompanied by serious social problems—poverty, unemployment, underemployment, family disorganization, alcoholism, and other emotional disorders.⁹

5 The exceptions were Kathryn (Dyakanoff) Seller who taught school briefly in the 1920s and Olga (Rankin) Bolsharin who served as postmaster around 1910. Both were married to outsiders. William Brown, a deputy U.S. marshal in the 1930s, also had Unangâ ancestry.

6 Archives, University of Alaska Fairbanks. Olaus Murie Papers, MS-230, Box 8, FF#29. *Diary*, page 58, June 2, 1936.

7 Philip G. Armstrong to Commissioner Kernes. Alaska State Archives. RG 05, RS 1 box AS4477. The child was eventually enrolled in the public school.

8 Violet V.N. Assenmacher, letter to Ray Hudson, October 8, 1979.

9 Jones, *The Urban Native*, 1.

Her findings paralleled what was happening at Unalaska in the 1920s and 1930s as the village of Iliuliuk made its circuitous and white-dominated way towards incorporation as a first class city in 1942. Among the changes and challenges facing Natives and to which she attributed far-reaching social consequences were

- the loss of social controls to which people had been accustomed (the family, peer groups, respected elders, and formal authority)
- a loss of role function for some men and women
- the stigmatization of poverty
- the loss of shared economic responsibility balanced between husband and wife
- the loss of social supports
- the presence of new technologies
- unemployment and underemployment

The federal policy of assimilation had, in significant ways, been accepted by Unalaska Unanga. Linguistic differences were critical because the presence of non-English speaking children threatened the local school. Nowhere was assimilation more institutionalized than in education. The school system was a paragon of uniformity. Beginning in 1887, a school that was open to all students had operated at Unalaska under the federal Bureau of Education. In 1905, however, Congress passed the Nelson Act establishing two sets of schools, one for Native children and one for white children along with “children of mixed blood who lead a civilized life.” In Alaska the “white” schools became the responsibility of the territorial government. Because the Unalaska school served both Native and non-Native students, it was closed in 1905 for non-compliance with the new law. White residents attempted to elect a local school board, a prerequisite for establishing a territorial school, but the minimum twenty registered voters could not be found. In 1906 the Bureau of Indian Affairs’ school reopened, with the few non-Native students attending as they had before. By 1923 the number of non-Native children had increased, reflecting a proportionate growth of immigrant residents. The white community was finally able to get everything in order to transfer the school to the territory’s department of education. Enrollment stood at 87 in the spring of 1923. An increase to about 100 was expected to accompany the opening of the territorial school that fall. Clara Goss, a community activist and former teacher, wrote to the territorial commissioner of education. “It is understood locally,” she said, “that all the children of the community will attend.... it is a certainty that no children would attend the Gov. school if they could by attending the Territorial school be classed as ‘Whites.’”¹⁰

“The public or Territorial schools are for Whites and half-breeds,” wrote a 1931 report from the Department of the Interior, “the Federal schools for the natives alone. Native children of unusual promise are sometimes transferred to the Territorial schools, where a higher standard can be maintained than in the

¹⁰ Clara Goss to L.D. Henderson, Commissioner of Education, Juneau. April 21, 1923.

Federal schools. Thus the way of possible development is pointed out; but the road will undoubtedly be a long one for these simple and extremely primitive people.”¹¹ In the face of such strident government sanctioned racism, it is no wonder that Unangâ parents welcomed the closing of the federally operated school and the opening of a territorial one.

In 1917, on the fifteenth anniversary of his role as chief of Unalaska (and, it could be argued, paramount chief of the eastern Aleutians), Alexei Yatchmeneff had urged his people to remember their Unangâ heritage and to not attempt to pass as whites. This was directly at odds with federal Indian policy. Yatchmeneff’s counsel, delivered long before this policy was formally replaced in 1934, was clearly at odds with the political, economic, and social requirements for advancement in the dominant society. If taken to mean that Unangâ culture, values, and language were to be practiced to the exclusion of “western” skills, it was clearly a handicap to “upward mobility” for his people. This, however, was not the case. Yatchmeneff had successfully integrated much of western culture into his own life. He was fluent in *Unangam tunuu* and Russian, and he had a workable command of English. In addition to having been a successful sea otter hunter in his youth, he was proficient in several “western” vocations. He was a skilled carpenter and wooden boat builder. (The 1910 and 1920 census reports listed him as a carpenter.) In addition, he repaired shoes and glasses to supplement his family’s income. Exactly what he meant remains a mystery but his life suggests a center founded on Unangâ values. He could incorporate western skills while practicing traditional subsistence activities, retaining cultural components unique to Unangâ life, language, and the Orthodox religion.

Non-Unangâ residents and government employees, on the other hand, were emphatically monocultural. They made no attempt either to learn *Unangam tunuu* or to understand the culture. They saw the practice of any Unangâ cultural component or the use of the language as evidence of inferiority. By the time Yatchmeneff died in 1937, Unalaska had been transformed.

Five days after his death, Jessica Jorgensen, beginning her third year as the primary teacher, wrote to the commissioner of education. She was overwhelmed by the arrival of eight new students who had come from Makushin and who spoke no English. Although four of the Lekanoff and Galaktionoff children were over ten years of age, with the eldest soon to turn sixteen, all of them were crowded into her primary classroom with twenty other students. The four older ones sat at a table while the younger ones used chairs without writing desks.

“I was in the first grade,” Mary Diakanoff recalled, “when the Makushin people came.” She remembered Eva and Marina Galaktionoff and that the Makushin children were kept at the back of the room.¹² Fortunately, the new arrivals were

11 U.S. Dept. of the Interior, Annual Report of the Board of Indian Commissioners to the Secretary of the Interior for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1931. GPO, Washington, 1931: 45.

12 Mary Diakanoff, conversation with the Ray Hudson, June 22, 2012.



Chief Alexei Yatchmeneff and his daughter Pauline. (Identification by Katherine Grimness.) Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.

good-natured and, according to Jorgensen, enjoyed what they perceived as “an entertainment specially put on for them.” The other children delighted in the pantomimes and chaos that enveloped the classroom. Jorgensen did what she could. She drafted an older student as an interpreter during the first weeks. In her letter, she wrote, “Out of the entire enrollment in school, there are only two or three children who can actually speak Aleute. They understand it but never speak it on the play ground or at home.”¹³

In addition to the Makushin children, there were 52 other students including 18 in the intermediate grades (3, 4, 5) and 14 in the upper grades (6, 7, 8). Only six were non-Native children. Jorgensen was not a teacher who held herself aloof from Unanga culture. The year previously she had invited two local women to teach basketry in the school and the classes continued in the fall of 1937. At least one of these women, Anfesia Shapsnikoff, was a strong proponent of her language and may very well have used it in part while teaching. The other, Annie Stepetin, was originally from Makushin. An examination of the names of students confirms that while many of them, as adults, understood the language, their actual fluency in the spoken language was restricted.¹⁴ This lends credence to Jorgensen’s estimate that “only two or three” students were able to speak *Unangam tunuu*.

“I was scared the first time I came to school,” remembered Nick Lekanoff. “I didn’t know what to do. I couldn’t speak English.... The only thing I used to say was, ‘Yeah.’”¹⁵ Nick and his brother Steve stuck it out, however, and the records show that these fifteen and sixteen year old boys spent 173 days in first grade. Eventually, the teacher had had enough. “Your dad needs your help out there,” Nick was told.¹⁶ Simeon Lekanoff was ill. He had returned to Unalaska, the village of his birth, and been elected to the church committee. In 1941 both he and his brother Stephan, who had become a much-respected elder on St. George, died.

For all the difficulties and challenges Unalaska presented to newcomers, there were elements of Unanga culture that remained integral to community life. There were gatherings at which Sergie Tutiakoff would perform Aleut dances while his mother, Jennie Galaktionoff, sang.¹⁷ During the Christmas season, there were five or six stars, each with its own group of carolers that would visit homes late into the night. If the stars met on the street, they would sing to each other. Sergie Tutiakoff often took children around staring during the day. Games were played after the conclusion of Great Lent and Easter services. In summer, men and boys competed in *angaayu* [partners], a type of baseball played with

13 Jessica Jorgensen to A.E. Karnes. October 27, 1937. Alaska State Archives. RG 05, RS 01, box AS4477. Folder: Unalaska 1937-39. 4586-60.

14 Record of Grades, 1937-1938. Unalaska City School records, in the collection of Ray Hudson.

15 Nick Lekanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 107.

16 *Alaska’s Village Voices*, a supplement to Alaska newspapers, Bill Hess, editor. November 2002:28.

17 German Stepetin, an accomplished Unanga dancer, died in 1935.

a bat and a ball made by wrapping grass around a stone and covering it with seal skin. There were two teams. One person was the batter and a good many of the others were runners who had to dash between two bases without being hit with a thrown ball. Visiting teams would come from Akutan to play.

Marva Borenin, Nick Galaktionoff's grandmother, died in August 1939 after a short illness. On the day of her death, she asked to bathe, and Nick went outside the house. Later, Marva called him to her side, hugged him, and told him that if God called her, she would go. "So, I asked her, if she got there to call me also," he said. Then Marva gave him a dollar and he went to the store to buy candy. "When I got to the store, I went to Ted Sherebernikoff because he spoke Aleut," Nick said. By the time he had eaten the candy and explored the beach, it was evening. His mother met him, took him to her house for dinner where she told him his grandmother had died. He rushed back to the house and found her body had been prepared and laid out in the living room. "I ran to her and cried," he said, "but someone took me away."¹⁸ Years later, he named one of his daughters after her.

Nick Galaktionoff's stay at school was even shorter than Nick Lekanoff's.

His sister Molly had married Peter Lukanin of Biorka in January 1938. Their son Moses was born at the Unalaska hospital a year later, in September 1939. Nick persuaded his sister and brother-in-law to take him to the village. "I was looking forward to seeing Biorka," he said. They hiked the trail from Unalaska to Ugadaga Bay. After a rest and something to eat on the beach, they took a small double-ender with an inboard engine across the inlet. At the village he found "five wooden houses, the church, and one barabara." Andrew and Eustina Makarin had room in their home and so Nick moved in with them. He spent that summer in the village, often playing with seven-year-old Feddie Yatchmenoff. Before the men went to the Pribilof Islands that summer, Andrew showed him a number of former house sites across the river

One morning in Biorka, while the men were still in the Pribilofs, Nick saw three or four strangers talking with Sophie Ermeloff, Alex Ermeloff's adult daughter. Later villagers saw smoke, possibly from a campfire, at a point further up the bay. When Andrew Makarin returned home from the Pribilofs, the villagers told him what they had seen. "But seems like, he didn't believe us," Nick said. That winter when Andrew went to his camp, he found it disturbed. He still used a baidarka and he went to Ruff Ermeloff's camp on Dushkot Island. From that islet they saw a trail of smoke rising from a bay on the Unalaska side of the inlet. They took a skiff and, leaving one man in it, two of them walked toward the campfire. "When they got there," Nick said, "they saw a bird was being cooked, but no one was there, but they knew they were being watched." Their conclusion was the same as that made by men at Atka and Attu. "It was the Japanese," Nick said. "They were on this island because they knew the island had a military build-up."¹⁹

18 Nick Galaktionoff, recorded in 1980 and translated by Ishmael Gromoff. Collection of Ray Hudson.

19 Nick Galaktionoff, recorded in 1980 and translated by Ishmael Gromoff. Collection of Ray Hudson.

Stories about sightings of Japanese men, about Japanese scientific explorations that were actually sent to map the islands, about the Japanese landing on St. Paul in 1906 when a number of them were killed by Unanga, and about the disappearance of men on Attu in 1910, all these continued to be shared topics of conversation. In June 1911, Biorka men found four Japanese sailors who managed to convey that they had come from a wrecked vessel. The Biorka men brought them to Unalaska where they were cared for by the deputy marshal while the Revenue Cutter *Manning* went in search of other survivors. A few days later, however, their undamaged ship sailed into Unalaska bay, revealing that the four men were deserters and not survivors from a wreck.²⁰ The presence of Japanese fishing boats and surveying parties throughout the Chain gave rise to speculations. John Denisoff told these stories to his granddaughter and warned her that she could be captured and used as a slave.²¹ This made young Mary so nervous that she and other children would hide even when Japanese teams off visiting ships played baseball against local teams at Unalaska.



Left to right: Eva Kudrin, Alice Moller, and Tatiana [Nevzoroff] Kudrin. Photo courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

Innokentii Borenin, Nick's stepfather, was visiting Biorka with Nick when they joined several Biorka men to go hunting seals and sea lions just past Old Man Rocks at the north end of Sedanka Island shortly before the war. It was during Lent and the men planned on being gone from home only a few hours. The

20 Davenport, Clara Ellen and Noah Cleveland Davenport, *Unalaska Days: A Diary* (August 7, 1910-August 7, 1912). Xerox copy, Unalaska City School Library.

21 Arnold, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan*, 34.

eight men had two dories belonging to Andrew Makarin and Ruff Ermeloff. No sooner had they landed in a small bay, about 100 feet wide, than the wind began blowing. They rigged up a block and tackle and hoisted the dories high onto the beach. A camp house, suitable for two men, had been built there some years previously. The men crowded into it, living on tea and a little seaweed. Over the next couple of days, Andrew crafted a stove from oil drums that had washed ashore. He was a skilled tinsmith and even managed to make a chimney. The beach on this island was poor. Blue fox that had been planted here had starved to death. One of the men managed to shoot a sea lion, but it sank before it could be recovered. There was small lake nearby where they collected fresh water. After almost two weeks, the weather improved, and even though the swells coming in were huge, they decided to leave. Nick hopped into Andrew's boat with other men, and, once beyond the swells, they waited for the second dory. Andrew shouted at them to be sure to jump in as soon as the dory hit the water. But as the skiff headed into the waves, Innokentii Borenin slipped. The boat took off, leaving him stranded. The other two boats hovered just outside the reach of the swells for an hour before they were able to rescue him. They arrived back at Biorka a week before Easter.

Two significant changes occurred at Kashega in the early 1940s. The first was the death of John Denisoff, who had served as chief for almost a decade. He died at Unalaska. The second was Mike and Dora Kudrin's move to Unalaska. After their daughter Alice died in infancy, they brought Polly to Unalaska where she could receive medical attention for a persistent eye ailment. Mike had made several trips to Unalaska by skiff and then on foot to secure needed medicine. They also wanted Polly to be able to attend school. However, her eye problem reduced her attendance.²² Although living at Unalaska, they retained a home at Kashega.

On April 8, 1940, a few months after he had arrived as the new deputy U.S. marshal, Verne Robinson was listening to the radio and heard that Germany had landed troops in Denmark and Norway.²³ While Japanese aggression in Asia had worried many in Alaska, it was not until the invasion of Scandinavia was followed by the occupation of Holland and Belgium a month later that Congress began the fortification of Alaska. Surveys of Amaknak Island and Chernofski were made that summer, after which strong disagreements arose over the suitability of Dutch Harbor as a military outpost, primarily because of the mountains surrounding it. The value of a deep anchorage won out, however, and authorization to construct Fort Mears on Amaknak Island (within Unalaska Bay) was issued on October 10, 1940, a month after construction of a runway at Cold Bay had begun.²⁴ Fort Mears would provide an Army garrison along with

22 Eva Tcheripanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 53.

23 Diary of Verne Robinson, 1940. Unbound forms. Pat Locke Archival Collection, Museum of the Aleutians.

24 NARA, RG 338 (U.S. Army Commands), Alaskan Dept. Drafts of the Official History. *Fort Mears*. Endnote 1.

fixed harbor defenses for the protection of the Navy base. In August 1940, 59 civilian Siems-Drake workers began construction of barracks at Dutch Harbor for a unit of Marines scheduled to arrive to defend the nascent Navy base. Word that construction jobs were available quickly spread and men arrived from several Aleutian communities. By October 5 the barracks was completed and a detachment of slightly more than 120 men arrived only to discover “there was little to defend.”²⁵

Construction continued and the work force grew. As Fort Mears rose from the flats surrounding Margaret Bay on Amaknak, the military began hunting for a suitable site for an airbase west of Cold Bay. The surreptitious construction of Fort Glenn at Otter Point on the eastern end of Umnak Island began in January 1942. Chernofski Bay was used as a staging point from which everything had to be barged eleven miles across to Umnak.

In the meantime, Unalaska boomed with civilian and military personnel. Housing was at a premium. The little used Russian school building was subdivided into apartments and rented primarily to men who had brought along their wives and children. Bars flourished. A house of prostitution was opened on Expedition Island, in the inner harbor between Unalaska and Amaknak. Most of the military construction was restricted to Amaknak Island, but attention began to be given to sites surrounding the village itself. Hoping for more leverage when negotiating with the military, businessmen drafted a petition to incorporate the village as a first class city. Dated August 18, 1941, it was circulated during the late summer and early fall during a time when many Unangaġ men were still working in the Pribilof Islands.²⁶ This may account for the absence of several signatures that might have been expected. Two days before Christmas, voters approved the motion and on March 3, 1942, the City of Unalaska was declared incorporated by Judge Simon Hellenthal.

Unangaġ men were skilled mariners and several, including Nick McGlashan of Akutan and Henry Swanson of Unalaska, were employed on vessels. Nick, in addition to doing electrical work, was a deckhand, mate, and later a captain for the Army transport service.²⁷ Henry was a pilot on several vessels. Andrew Gronholdt was among workers who came from Sand Point on Popof Island, just off the Alaska Peninsula. He worked on the Marine barracks and afterwards found employment on a vessel ferrying supplies from Chernofski to Umnak. In February 1942 they stopped at Makushin and he went ashore. He didn't know Pete Olsen, but, in addition to a man from the army, the only people he saw were a man who was “German or something” and his wife. Andrew recalled that they were restricted to staying right in the village.²⁸

25 Denfeld, *The Defense of Dutch Harbor*, 35.

26 The first group did not leave St. Paul for Unalaska until August 9. Others left on August 20, September 21, December 11. *St. Paul Log*.

27 Bereskin, Peri, “The Akutan Whaling Station,” in Ruberg, ed., *Taniisik*, Vol. IV. 1984:5.

28 Andrew Gronholdt, conversation with Ray Hudson, April 18, 1996.

Kashega, Biorka, and Makushin were included in a set of Native Family Record Cards, dated August 5, 1942. The assessed value of the seven homes at Kashega was \$2,125. When personal property, valued at \$2,041.50, was added to this, the total value of the village came to \$4,166.50. The four houses at Biorka were valued at \$1,475; personal property at \$2,512.50, for a total of \$3,987.50. Only the Borenin house at Makushin was included in this survey, valued at \$400.50, with personal property at \$367.80, for a total of \$768.30. The Borenins' home was valued slightly higher than those at Biorka (averaging \$368.75) and slightly lower than those at Kashega (valued at \$425). Specific personal property included saws, axes, carpenter tools, shotguns, fishing lines, and sheds. The total assessed value of the three villages was \$8,922.30. This did not include property owned by Olsen, Jacobsen, and the sheep ranch at Kashega.

A July 1940 report described Kashega in detail. The comment that the chief also read services in the church suggests George Borenin had replaced the ailing John Denisoff. The twenty-six residents were divided equally between male and female. "Most of them speak English and quite a few of them are able to read and write," wrote Lieutenant E.S. Endom of the Coast Guard cutter *Shoshone*.

The village has a Chief for government purposes. There is a Russian Catholic Church located here, but no Priest. However, the Chief remarked that he "read at the Church" on Sundays. Water is available from a stream in the rear of the village. Light is provided by kerosene lamps and the houses are heated mostly by coal provided by the local store. The dwellings are frame houses and appeared to be kept fairly clean. Out-houses are provided for toilet purposes.... No radio facilities for communication with the outside are available at this village.²⁹

Endom wrote that while men worked at St. Paul Island each summer, women caught and smoked fish for the winter. Back in the village, men hunted and trapped fox during the winter. A succinct summary of these villages was given by Captain F.A. Zeusler. After declaring that he had been "in practically every barabara and in every native house from Unalaska to Attu" he said people at Biorka, Makushin, and Kashega (along with those at Akutan and Nikolski) "had clean homes, electric lights, running water. Their villages even had their own light plant. Their villages were clean and progressive."³⁰ Even as the military buildup at Unalaska and Chernofski increased, the residents of Kashega and Biorka had achieved a balance between subsistence and outside employment that had proved sustainable.

Men from Biorka had the most direct encounter with military personnel during their regular trips for supplies when they crossed Beaver Inlet and left their skiffs at Ugadaga Bay before hiking the trail to Unalaska. A temporary outpost

29 NARA RG 26. Records of the U.S. Coast Guard, Records of the Bering Sea Patrol 1926-1940. Census and Sociological Reports, Alaska Villages. U.S.C.G.C. *Shoshone*. 1 August 1940.

30 *The Alaska Fishing News*. Ketchikan, Alaska. May 24, 1943.

for anti-aircraft guns had been built outside Ugadaga by 1942 and the Biorka men were intercepted on the suspicion that they were Japanese. Irene Makarin recalled that the first time this happened, it took almost two weeks before Andrew Makarin, George Yatchmenoff, Ruff Ermeloff and his brother Akenfa or “Candy” were able to return home. Only Candy Ermeloff was fluent in English.

By June 1942 every flat piece of ground on Amaknak Island had been used.³¹ Fort Mears carpeted Margaret Bay with twenty-eight barracks, “mess halls, recreation buildings, a theatre, PX, library, chapel, warehouses, a Station Hospital and adjacent to the garrison a camp of 30 Quonset huts.” The hospital had a 270-bed capacity spread over 28 buildings. A naval station was built at Dutch Harbor, supplemented with the S.S. *Northwestern*, anchored and then beached just off shore, where many of the Siems-Drake workers lived. A bomb-proof power plant was constructed. A 500-man mess hall was completed in March 1942. Roads veined the small island, climbing up the two highest elevations (Bunker Hill and Ballyhoo) where defensive outposts were built. Cement ramps and hangers for seaplanes neared completion. At its peak in 1942 Siems-Drake workers numbered 5,157.

Looking toward Beaver Inlet from the top of Ugadaga Pass in a photograph taken circa 1944. The Quonset huts were erected after the attack on Unalaska. Photograph courtesy Ray Hudson.

“This place is nothing but armies,” Irene Makarin said, remembering the Unalaska of 1942.



31 Denfeld, *The Defense of Dutch Harbor*, 30-59.



Storm. Biorka. Photograph by Carlene Arnold.

Chapter 16

The Attack and the Evacuation



Nick Galaktionoff was asleep when gunfire awakened him about 5:30 on the morning of June 3, 1942. He had seen and heard military target practice before, most dramatically when a boat pulled a target out in the bay and the heavy guns from Amaknak Island fired at it. As he struggled awake, he made out the words, “Japanese come!” He ran to the window, expecting the streets to be flooded with invading troops. He joined Cecil Diakanoff on the street, and they watched the havoc as Japanese planes bore down on the village. People ran to bomb shelters and vehicles sped past. Nick noticed Blackie Floyd, owner of one of the bars, and about eight civilians in the back of a truck. A plane flew overhead, not much higher than the electric poles, and the ground was chipped away by gunfire. Nick dashed for a pile of cement sacks stored near the U.S. marshal’s house.

The planes in this attack—a combination of Kate bombers and Zeros—flew a path over Sedanka Island, delivered their bombs, and returned in much the same direction to carriers stationed in the North Pacific.

The next day, about six in the evening, Nick was walking up from the dock with John Bereskin of Akutan when the sirens went off and ten Japanese fighters and eleven dive-bombers struck again. Before he was able to reach his foxhole, the oil tanks on Dutch Harbor were hit and dark clouds billowed into the air.¹ The oil burned for days, filling the air with smoke and sending a dark rainbow into the water. These planes had approached Dutch Harbor by skirting the northern end of Unalaska Island; they returned by flying south, past Makushin and Kashega, between Unalaska and Umnak Islands.

¹ Nick Galaktionoff, recorded April 10, 1976.

Those killed in the first attack included twenty-five newly-arrived soldiers at Fort Mears. Casualties the next day raised the final death toll to 43. No local residents were killed or wounded. The details of the attack on Dutch Harbor and its defense have been chronicled in several books by scholars and participants and do not need to be restated here except as recalled by former residents of the three villages. Mary Diakanoff remembered how, at night, she looked out of the bomb shelter her family used and saw Mt. Newhall—still dappled with winter snow—glowing red from the burning tanks across the water. Her father, Carl Moller, was the civilian fire marshal but the only equipment he had been given was a bucket of sand.²

Constantine and Helen Lekanoff were awaiting the birth of a child when the attack came. Constantine was a son of Simeon Lekanoff and a half-brother to Nick Lekanoff. His first wife had died in childbirth and now Helen was expecting their fourth child. Her mother had come from St. George to help. They lived in a small house near the church. On the second day of the attack, while residents took shelter in bomb shelters, Helen remained at home and went into premature labor. Her husband found her there after she had given birth to a baby girl, Alita. He brought her and the baby to the bomb shelter. The infant was “so small, they thought she was a doll. The noise was terrible,” Helen said. “Someone almost sat on her, she was so small. It was terrible in there.”³

Recollections from childhood are often reshaped in light of subsequent knowledge, and memories of the attack on Unalaska and Dutch Harbor became interwoven with subsequent events. Irene Makarin remembered standing outside at Biorka and waving at the Japanese planes. This would have been on the first day of the bombing when the planes flew over Beaver Inlet. “All the kids that are playing outside, they’re standing there, waving at them,” Irene said. “They don’t bother us, just past the Biorka. They go around that lake over there. They go around and they come back and they’re really low. All the kids are standing up, waving at them. They were waving at us, too.” She recalled that Peter Lukanin and Candy Ermeloff arrived from Unalaska and reported news of the bombing to Alex Ermeloff, the chief. They also brought word of an impending evacuation of the village. Eva Tcheripanoff’s memories also blur the bombing of Unalaska with the evacuation of Kashega Village. She, too, recalled being outside as Japanese planes flew overhead just as a vessel arrived to remove the villagers. Several vivid memories merged—airplanes passing overhead, the fear of invasion, and the eventual evacuation.

In fact, a month passed between the attack on Unalaska and the evacuation of Kashega, Makushin, and Biorka. The confused memories of childhood do, however, reflect the official bumbling that surrounded the removal of Unangañ from the Aleutian and Pribilof islands. After the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association successfully fought for federal recognition and redress, between 1977

2 Mary Diakanoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 13, 2002.

3 “Alita,” *The Aleutian Eagle*, June 3, 1982:7.

and 1988, Unanga's experiences during World War II became subjects for college theses, dissertations, newspaper articles, books, and films. Hours and volumes of testimony confirm the ill-conceived removal of villagers, the burning of Atka, the pervasive vandalism of homes, the deaths and privations in the relocation camps, and the overarching bureaucratic indifference that surrounded the return. The material collected during the reparations process focused on the largest communities: St. Paul, St. George, Atka, Akutan, Nikolski, and Unalaska. The story of what happened in the three villages was already slipping from memory.

Japanese forces took Kiska and captured its small contingent of U.S. naval weathermen on June 6. Attu was occupied the next day as the villagers prepared for church and the teacher and her husband looked forward to a quiet morning. Unlike the school teacher, Etta Jones, who within days of her husband's execution, was sent to Japan, the villagers were confined to the immediate vicinity of the village until September when they were shipped to Japan.

After being forced to find refuge at summer camps, the residents of Atka were swept from their village on June 12 as U.S. Navy personnel set fire to their homes and church. The vessel carrying the Atkans arrived at Nikolski, startling the military men stationed nearby. "They spent two or three days," recalled Dorofey Chercasen, "and told us what had happened to their village."⁴ By the time the Atkans reached Unalaska on June 16, the 477 people from St. Paul and St. George had arrived on the USAT *Delarof* after a hasty departure from the Pribilof Islands. A few Atkans had been left behind on their island and they were flown to Dutch Harbor. All 83 Atkans went aboard the *Delarof* and a few days later the overcrowded ship departed Dutch Harbor for Southeastern Alaska. The Pribilof people were set ashore at Funter Bay on Admiralty Island on June 24 to make their way among the ruins of an abandoned cannery and an abandoned gold mining camp. The next day, the Atkans were barged fifty miles away to Killisnoo, a deserted and burned-out fish plant at the site of a former Tlingit village. Conditions at both places were not so much substandard as non-existent.

Five days later, June 29, orders were issued to evacuate the remaining villages in the Chain.⁵

Nick Borenin was nineteen when he left Makushin aboard a small Navy vessel. Elia and Eva Borenin, along with Nick's two sisters and brother, had packed a few belongings, mainly clothes. In addition to the six members of the Borenin family, the evacuees included Pete Olsen, his wife and son. The village was simply left to itself. Although Nick Lekanoff was at Unalaska, he heard from Makushin people that, unlike Unalaska, Makushin was evacuated with no warning. "You guys are leaving" is all that they knew. There was no information about where they were

4 Chercasen, Dorofey, WW II Hearings Testimony.

5 Kirtland and Coffin, *The Relocation and Internment of the Aleuts*, 33.

going or if they would return.⁶ Elia Borenin was the starosta [church warden] and it seems likely that if he had anticipated a lengthy absence he would have taken steps to protect the chapel. “Everything in the church was left as it was,” Nick Borenin recalled. “All we brought was just a suitcase.”⁷ They disembarked at Chernofski.

The evacuation of Kashega was complicated by the fact that one or two residents were at Chernofski. Sophie Kudrin, a woman of legendary drive, was cooking at the sheep ranch while Eva, her fourteen-year-old daughter, was staying with

Efemia Kudrin. Efemia’s daughter, Olga, was in her early twenties, and she and Eva provided help to the older woman who suffered from severe arthritis. After dinner one day, Eva and Olga took garbage to throw over the bank and into the sea. They saw a boat of some kind out on the water. On their way back home, they passed Olga’s brother, Mike J., and told him, “We think we saw a boat out there, but we’re not sure.”



“All of a sudden those five planes was coming,” Eva recalled. “Good thing they didn’t bomb us!” She and Olga just stood and watched as planes flew southwest toward the end of the island. Before long, the boat they had seen earlier had anchored near the village. Olga later identified it as a PBY support boat.⁸ Men came ashore in a skiff and Mike J. told them about the planes that had just flown over. This news appears to have accelerated the evacuation of the village.

“We couldn’t take anything,” Eva recalled. She once remarked that people were in such a rush that they just grabbed any clothes at hand.⁹ Efemia Kudrin’s arthritis made climbing into the skiff and onto the tug a slow laborious process. “And it took a long time to get that Olga’s mother on aboard, you know,” Eva recalled. “So I didn’t take anything, no clothes or nothing. Just the way I’m wearing, I got on the boat.”¹⁰

On another occasion she recalled that after seeing the boats she went back to Olga’s house where Mike J. was helping his mother—“She couldn’t walk or anything”—and Eva did the dishes. “Mike said he was going to go down by the beach again. He said that boat must be coming for something.” Eva, Olga, and Mike J. returned to the beach. “The boat was coming; it anchored out and a dory came ashore and they told us to go right away. They didn’t even give us a chance

The Kudrins at Kashega. Back row, left to right: Sergie (21), Peter (30), Mike (27). Front row, left to right: George (17), Efemia (57), Olga (24) Photograph courtesy Jane Mensoff and Eva Kudrin.

6 Nick Lekanoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1040.

7 Nick Borenin in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 173.

8 Olga Mensoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 180.

9 Eva Tcheripanoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1049.

10 Eva Tcheripanoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 52.

to take our clothes or anything, you know, because those planes were flying around Kashega. It was just terrible....It was in the evening, about 9:30.”¹¹

George Gordaoff was older than Eva and his memories, while differing in some details, contain important additions.¹² He identified the boat that anchored off the village as a California herring boat, a “nice boat,” a “big boat.” The ensign was in charge and he gave the order for people to pack just a single suitcase. Villagers had time to board up the chapel, but there was not enough lumber to thoroughly protect all the windows in the homes. After the village pets were put down, the people took a dory out to the larger boat. When they arrived at Chernofski, they were housed in a tent. This soon proved unsatisfactory because water seeped through the canvas floor, actually forming puddles. After George reported the problem, the people were moved onto the *Columbia*, an Alaska Steamship Company vessel. Gordaoff recalled that the Kashega people were there for “about ten days” before the Nikolski residents arrived. This would date the evacuation of Kashega to approximately June 28, the day the general orders were issued.

The women, children, and a few men traveled from Nikolski on an FS or YP boat while the younger men traveled on a tug.¹³ They reached Chernofski on the evening of July 5 and immediately went aboard the *Columbia*. This vessel could easily accommodate all the passengers, unlike the overcrowded *Delarof*. “It was a nice big boat,” George Gordaoff recalled, “and it had nice staterooms, dining room, a real passenger boat.”¹⁴

Twenty individuals are listed as having been evacuated from Kashega, but this included Sophie Kudrin and George Gordaoff who were picked up at Chernofski. The list identified George Borenin as chief of the village. He was living with the elderly Nikifer Denisoff, while Sergie Borenin was staying with Cornelius Kudrin. There was Carl Borenin and his young daughter, Mary. Carl’s wife, Eva, had left the village. Peter Yatchmenoff appears to have been away from the village, but his wife Nellie was there with their two young children, Laura and Paul. Laressa Yatchmenoff, the widow of the late chief John Yatchmenoff, had returned to Kashega from Unalaska in time to be evacuated. Efemia Kudrin’s household included her daughter Olga along with visiting Eva, and also her sons Sergie, Mike J., and Peter. Peter’s wife Tatiana had gone to Atka to visit her ailing father and been evacuated from there.¹⁵ Six-year old Vassa Kudrin, daughter of Mike and Dora Kudrin was also at Kashega, but it is not known with whom she was living. Kashega not only had the largest population of the three villages, but three of its residents—Laresa Yatchmenoff, Efemia Kudrin, and Nikifer Denesoff—were older than any individuals at Biorka or Makushin. None would survive the evacuation.

11 Eva Tcheripanoff, Sophie Pletnikoff, Ray Hudson, conversation recorded May 23, 1982.

12 Quoted in Arnold, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan*, 109-110.

13 Sovoroff, Leonty, WWII Hearings Testimony.

14 Quoted in Arnold, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan*, 38.

15 Ray Hudson conversation with Alex Kudrin, October 11, 2012.

The evacuation of Biorka occurred on a day when the men had caught a large number of salmon and the women had started preparing them for drying.¹⁶ That evening, as it was growing dark, three men arrived in a small boat. Andrew Makarin and Candy Ermeloff went to meet them. The order for evacuation had arrived. Irene Makarin was inside when her father returned, spoke to his wife in *Unangam tunuu*, and told Irene to collect her clothes. She had no suitcase and so she used a flour sack. While the Biorka people gathered their belongings, the military men waited at the shore. By the time everyone arrived, it had grown dark. Irene recalled that they took a skiff out to a small vessel—“too small”—leaving their homes behind. “Holy Smoke,” Irene said, “they left—all the Biorka people—they left a lot of stuff. My mom and dad used to have chickens, dogs and cats, everything. They left a lot of good stuff in their houses.” The fish were left drying on racks. It was late and the children had fallen asleep when they arrived at a dock. Irene was awakened and led off the ship. “Me, I’m just crying,” she recalled. “I want my daddy, you know. Couldn’t see my daddy.” They walked past soldiers who stood in a line watching them as they boarded the *Columbia*.

The route taken by the *Columbia* from Chernofski has not been determined. Kohlhoff suggests it first went to Akutan and then backtracked to Dutch Harbor to collect the Biorka people. If those from Biorka were taken to Dutch Harbor, it would have been more likely that they boarded the vessel first and that the *Columbia* then proceeded to Akutan. George Gordaoff recalled that the *Columbia*, after leaving Chernofski, stopped at Unalaska and Akutan. If the ship stopped at Dutch Harbor, did Andrew Dyakinoff—who is listed on the manifest—get off? The strongest evidence that the *Columbia* went from Chernofski to Unalaska is Eva Tcheripanoff’s recollection.

We went from Kashega to Chernofski to pick my mom up. We stayed in Chernofski overnight.... We stopped over [at] Dutch [Harbor]. John [Tcheripanoff] was working over there that time. I wasn’t married to John. I was single. He used to work for Seims Drake or something over there. I saw him on the dock. I remember that. From there we went to Kodiak. From Kodiak to Ketchikan.... John left with them. John was traveling with those Unalaska people.

Nick Galaktionoff recalled both his sister, Molly Lukanin, and Andrew Makarin saying that “after the other villages had been picked up, a small boat came from Akutan and took the Biorka people to join the Akutan people on a larger ship.”¹⁷ In any event, eighteen people from Biorka and forty-one from Akutan soon found themselves at sea with the Nikolski, Kashega, and Makushin residents. The Biorka women and children were given one room and the men and boys another. During the trip to southeastern Alaska, sailors stood guard at the door to keep the children from having the run of the ship. On one occasion, Irene slipped out and went looking for her father. She was caught by a husky sailor who carried her

16 This account is based on recollections from Irene Makarin in *The Beginning of Memory*, 188-191.

17 Nick Galaktionoff, “Memories of Biorka,” in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 62.

back to the quarters while she struggled and cried, “I want my dad. I want my daddy!” The man handed her to Eustina Makarin who delivered a good scolding.

Among the shipboard traumas that Irene laughed about years later was breakfast. The first morning she was seated between her parents at a table with the other Biorka people. Breakfast was served and her father said, “You better eat something.” But Irene just stared at the odd food in front of her. “I never see cereal before, you know,” she said. “I turned around and told my dad, ‘I want my fish, boiled fish!’” All the Biorka kids, she said, had a hard time adjusting to the food.

“We were traveling with those Nikolski people,” Eva recalled. “And Peter Dushkin’s mother, Augusta— I used to be chubby. I had long brown hair—and every time I saw her it seemed she didn’t want to look at me. Every time she saw me, she just hide away from me.... She thought I was white people! Oh, she made me laugh after we knew each other and she told me, you know!” Augusta told her that sometimes when she was tired of being inside the cabin, she wanted to go out onto the deck but she was afraid. “She’d look around first, because she didn’t want to meet me!”¹⁸

As the ship traveled past Unimak Island and along the Alaska Peninsula, there were frequent boat drills. Olga Mensoff recalled that they stopped at False Pass for water.¹⁹ Nikifer Denisoff had hunted sea otters near here a half-century earlier, but now he was too old, his eyesight too poor, to join the younger men who took turns standing watch. The most he could do was to go to the railing, feel the familiar wind and smell the salt air as the ship made its slow way across a dark and heavy sea.

18 Eva Tcheripanoff, Sophie Pletnikoff, Ray Hudson, May 23, 1982.

19 Olga Mensoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 180.



Ward Lake map dating to 1935 showing the Wacker homestead, the CCC shop and garage, and the residential area of the camp. The "Play Ground" is a recreational beach. Ketchikan Museum.

Chapter 17

A Lake in the Woods



Beginning in 1977 a rising chorus of voices broke the decades of silence that had surrounded the evacuation. Unangaꣳ from the Pribilof Islands, Unalaska, and Atka led the effort to document what had happened. Evidence accumulated based on village size and the extent to which government agencies and non-Native personnel were represented. Testimony from St. Paul and Unalaska dominated the record. St. Paul was the largest Unangaꣳ community and had an entrenched government presence. Unalaska had a diverse Unangaꣳ population, economic and military importance, and a sizeable non-Native presence. Another factor that influenced documentation was the degree to which participants spoke fluent English. All of these factors worked against preservation of experiences from Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. While no one denied that testimony from these village residents was valuable, their testimony was harder to gather and eventually irrelevant as the quantity collected from larger communities grew to the critical mass needed to pursue effective action.

The result was that specifics from these villages are often missing. Nowhere is this truer than in documenting what happened in southeast Alaska. Imbedded among the far greater numbers from Akutan and Nikolski, the handful of residents from the three villages all too easily slipped past unnoticed and in subsequent publications were either omitted or generalized. *Personal Justice Denied*, the report of The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians, included neither testimony from nor incidents involving people from the three villages. It even mistakenly identified Chernofski as an Aleut village in 1942. Kohlhoff's *When the Wind Was a River*, created primarily by a masterful synthesis of documented evidence, suffered from the same lack of specificity. The evacuations of Makushin and Kashega were treated in a single sentence while that of Biorka was hypothesized.¹ His treatment of the years in Southeast

¹ Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 81.

rarely distinguished the five villages that arrived on the *Columbia*. Something like that will happen in this chapter where testimony from Akutan and Nikolski dominates descriptions of what occurred between July 1942 and April 1945 and hints at the experiences of people from the three villages.



Sophie Kudrin [Pletnikoff] and her daughter Eva Kudrin [Tcheripanoff] at Ward Lake. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

Unlike the Pribilof and Atka evacuees, who were taken directly to their camps, the residents of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin aboard the *Columbia* first arrived at Wrangell. On July 13, the 160 passengers were trucked to the Bureau of Indian Affairs' boarding school, Wrangell Institute. Built in 1932, backed by a steep mountain and surrounded by a dense forest of Sitka spruce, the three interconnected buildings brooded over the landscape about five miles south of the city. Families were assigned to used military tents pitched on the front lawn. Showers and medical check-ups followed. "Taking a shower was a shock for most of us," recalled Lavera Dushkin. "At Nikolski we had bathed ourselves from a small tub, but mostly we took steam baths in our banyas, so showers were new to us."² She served as an interpreter for members of a medical team that discovered "virus, pneumonia and shock," as she put it. Overall, the health of the evacuees was good, apart from tuberculosis.³ Any child or adult who was found with head lice had their hair cut short and kerosene rubbed into their scalps. This

2 Dushkin, Lavera, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

3 Statement of Captain F.A. Zeusler before the Ketchikan City Council, as reported in *The Alaska Fishing News*, May 24, 1943.

was left on for twelve hours after which the scalp was washed. Dr. John H. Clements of Wrangell inoculated for typhoid, gave initial immunizations, and vaccinated for small pox “all 159 of the refugees.” (Pete Olsen had already left the group and was seeking housing in Wrangell.)

“From that day we started eating dog salmon,” said Leonty Sovoroff about arrival at the Wrangell Institute, “tea and bread, day in and day out. We were fed three meals a day, but the food was not fit to eat, but we ate it because there was nothing else to eat. There was no meat, only cheap fish. It was always boiled, not cooked any other way.”⁴ Remembering the fish, Lavera Dushkin remarked, “It had an awful smell to it, not like the good salmon at Nikolski.”

For the younger crowd, the older teenagers and young adults who would later reflect on the implications of the evacuation, excitement and discovery filled the air. “Aleuts take it smilingly,” declared an article the week of their arrival. The weather was too hot but people got “a thrill out of the automobiles.”

One chap hailed a taxi out near the Institute with ‘how much to town?’ Driver quoted his rates. ‘Too much,’ said the Aleut. ‘I’ll walk.’ He did. Later in town, after joining one of his friends, he approached the cab driver with ‘take us out to the Institute’ and hauled out the necessary fare. Curiosity had gotten the better of him. Driver learned it was the first time he had ever ridden in an automobile.⁵

The people off the *Columbia* occupied all the tents so when 137 Unalaska people arrived the first of August aboard the S.S. *Alaska* they had to camp out in a bunkroom of the school. Eventually, women and children were given tents while men stayed in the bunkrooms. A few days after the Unalaska people arrived, the clerk of the local draft board drove out from Wrangell, registration cards in hand. “Many of the men wanted to know when they would get their rifles,” an article in *The Wrangell Sentinel* reported. The men remarked, “We know how to shoot and we want to get as many Japs as we can.”⁶ The list included the following—from Makushin: Nick Borenin; from Biorka: Alex Ermeloff, Peter Galaktionoff, Andrew Makarin, George Yatchmenoff, Ruff Ermeloff, and Willie Yatchmenoff; and, from Kashega: Carl Borenin, Sergie Borenin, George Borenin, Mike Kudrin, Cornelius Kudrin, and Sergie Kudrin. Feddie Yatchmenoff would sign up as soon as he was old enough. Alex Ermeloff, Andrew Makarin, and George Yatchmenoff had to register as “old men” born before 1897. We get a slight indication of their build from the cards. Andrew was 5’ 6” and weighted 140 pounds. Alex was two inches shorter and weighted five pounds less. George was only 5’2” but weighed 160 pounds.

4 Sovoroff, Leonty, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

5 *The Wrangell Sentinel*, July 17, 1942.

6 *The Wrangell Sentinel*, August 7, 1942.

Within two weeks of arrival, the Unalaska people were transported to Burnett Inlet on the western side of Etolin Island. Here, in the ruins of a burned-out cannery, they dispersed among eleven cabins and one large bunkhouse until they were able to construct additional small dwellings. Heavy rains swept Southeast all that week.

Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin people, along with those from Nikolski and Akutan, were the last to be settled although a site had been selected by late July.⁷ Scrambling to find a location, officials chose a Civilian Conservation Corps camp that had been constructed inland from Ward Lake, a small recreational lake eight miles out of Ketchikan. Abandoned at the outbreak of the war, the site was being used by a unit of the Air Corps Marine Rescue Service that was then transferred to the Annette Island Army Air Field. It was immediately clear that the camp did not contain sufficient housing. The Unanga men set to work constructing a barge to carry lumber along with their few possessions the ninety miles from Wrangell to Ketchikan. An Army transport took the majority of the evacuees to Ward Cove and then they traveled to the camp on August 23. They arrived about two in the morning. The remainder, including Dorofey "Rusty" Chercasen, arrived a few days later on the *Penguin*, towing the barge full of building supplies. The barge was then hauled overland to the camp. "My first impression," said Rusty on seeing the camp with its two bunk-houses, two cabins, a latrine, and a mess-hall, "was that of being put in prison."⁸ Fortunately, they had brought tents from Wrangell Institute. People set to work despite their oppressive surroundings. Pauline Whitfield, the teacher from Nikolski, said "the CCC boys left the cabins in a filthy condition.... Aleuts right away made repairs and worked hard to make them habitable."⁹

"All were glum," reported Fred Geeslin, with the Alaska Indian Service, noting that it was the only time he had seen the people distressed.¹⁰

Ward Lake sits a little inland from Ward Cove. The cove opens to the northern end of a long channel, one of the innumerable waterways weaving through the Inside Passage. But despite all that water, the camp itself was land-locked and shadowed by forest. "My first impression," said William Ermeloff, "was that it seemed dark, because of the trees surrounding it." Dark and damp. As much as anything, the dampness troubled Luke Shelikoff of Akutan. He referred to the camp as "a damp old thing" where the "ground was wet all the time." It was oppressive and unhealthy. "But talk about damp, we stayed under the woods, up here [at Akutan] we see the sun every day, nothing blocks the [sun] because there are no trees up here."¹¹

7 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, July 31, 1942:2.

8 Chercasen, Dorofey, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

9 "Aleut Camp at Ward Cove Causes Much Discussion at Meeting of City Council," *The Alaska Fishing News*, May 21, 1943.

10 Quoted in Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 105.

11 Luke Shelikoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 182-188.

“The only things they gave us,” recalled Bill Ermeloff, “were a small camp wood burning stove, a few pieces of cookware, pot skillet, some pieces of heavy china dishware and some eating utensils. No furniture of any sort was provided.”¹² People remembered the better cooking ware, dishes and tableware they had left behind.¹³ Ten houses, 16 by 16 feet, were constructed for the smaller families. A skilled electrician from Akutan wired the buildings. The men “had accomplished a surprisingly great deal in a short time,” Fred Geesling told the local Rotary Club on September 11.¹⁴ By October 2, according to the local newspaper, sixteen houses and quarters for the teacher had been built. Nothing could relieve the overcrowding, however. Feddie Yatchmenoff recalled that there were five in his small cabin, and Irene Makarin remarked that she and her parents had lived in a single room.¹⁵ The laundry building, with its long tin basin with four cold water faucets, was the only building with running water. There were two shower stalls at one end. Water for homes was drawn from a hydrant located in Heritina Sovoroff’s house. Sanitation was inherently poor with a single large “outhouse” that Lavera Dushkin called “our village toilet.”

In it there was a long trough, with no seats whatsoever. It was open all the way across. There was always water running into it, to keep it somewhat fresh, I guess. We had to use commodes at home, and dump them in the toilet. All that stuff exposed was not sanitary nor healthy. It made bugs a problem.¹⁶

“There was not much to do at the camp after the cabins were built and we settled down,” recalled William Ermeloff, “if you could call it that. Some of our younger people organized games and dances.”¹⁷ One Sunday, shortly after arriving, a group of young people walked the eight miles into town and back to see a movie. Elementary school was taught by Pauline Whitfield, while a few older students returned to the Wrangell Institute. George Gordaoff, having stayed in Wrangell on a building project, was ready to go to Ward Cove when he was sent to school in Juneau, where he found part-time employment. He remarked that the children who attended high school boarded away from the camp and this both lessened the crowded conditions and insured health care for those students.¹⁸

Men needed to find jobs because they were expected to support their own families. To get jobs they needed to find a way into Ketchikan and to use a telephone. The telephone installed in the school building at Ward Lake was off-limits, and there was no public transportation that covered the nine miles into town. Enter Eugene Wacker, a kind-hearted entrepreneur, who started a taxi run and charged 35 cents a ride. “He was a great help to us in finding jobs around

12 Ermeloff, William, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

13 Dushkin, Lavera, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

14 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, September 11, 1942:6.

15 Feddie G. Yatchmenoff and Irene Makarin, Vol. VI, Depositions at Unalaska and Nikoliski.

16 Lavera Dushkin, WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

17 Ermeloff, William. WW II Hearings Testimony, 1981.

18 Quoted in Arnold, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan*, 112.

Ketchikan,” recalled Leonty Sovoroff. Dorofey Chercasen added, “As soon as he knew of a job opening, he came to our camp to tell us about [it] and drove those who wanted the job into town. He then would also drive us back to the camp after work.” Shortly after starting his taxi service, Wacker and a passenger were on their way to town when, entering a sharp curve, they met an on-coming car with its lights on bright. Wacker swerved, his car rolled over, and his passenger exclaimed, “What the hell, Bill!” Fortunately, there were no injuries.¹⁹ Wacker eventually bought a small bus, but even that was sometimes so crowded that teenagers would have to hold on to the fenders for the ride back to the camp.

“We owe a lot to the kindness of this dear man,” recalled Dorofey Chercasen. “The BIA nor other government agency provided us with transportation into town nor helped us with finding employment. Eugene Wacker did this for the three years we were at Ward Lake.... He would help bail our people from the city jail and then drove them home to the camp, or to their job.”

Men found employment at a variety of jobs. Leonty Sovoroff worked at the Ketchikan Cold Storage during the summer and for most of the winter. Occasionally, “a halibut head or two” could be brought home from the plant for food. Jobs were found at the Coast Guard station at Point Hagens. “The Creek Street Bridge was mostly constructed by Aleuts,” Leonty said. Twenty-six men traveled to Juneau to work for the Guy Atkinson Construction Company in the spring of 1943.²⁰ Sophie Kudrin, not to be outdone by men, found work as a housekeeper for several homes in Ketchikan. She lived in the town itself for three years.²¹

Eugene Wacker and his bus. University of Alaska Fairbanks, Rasmuson Library Archives, T#7.



19 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, October 5, 1942:3.

20 *The Alaska Sportsman*, April 1943:17.

21 Hudson, ed., *Unugulu{ Tunusangin*, 223.

A chapel was soon constructed. According to John Tcheripanoff, it was attached to the messhall, while Lavera Dushkin recalled it being in one of three larger buildings; the other two being the school and a laundry. It was furnished with icons taken from chapels at Akutan and Nikolski because, unlike the three villages, both of these villages had time to crate church belongings prior to the evacuation.²² Services were conducted by readers, of which there was at least one from each village. Father M.A. Baranof, the priest from St. Paul, who took up residence in Juneau, visited periodically. In February 1943 he spoke before the Wrangell Rotary Club and said that the Aleuts found Southeastern weather severe compared with what they had been accustomed to in the Aleutians.²³

Left to right: Vassa Kudrin, Eva Kudrin, John Tcheripanoff, and Sophie Kudrin [Pletnikoff] at Ward Lake. Photograph courtesy Mary Diakanoff.

The church calendar with its cycle of services gave shape to the years. Easter and Christmas, of course, were the most important and elaborate occasions. There is a photograph showing a group of adults and children from Ward Lake with two Christmas stars. The caption says they were at the schoolhouse entertaining guests from the Ketchikan USO.

Part of the festivities of these innately musical people is the *a capella* singing, in Old Church Slavonic, Aleut, and English, of old Russian hymns. During the singing, the huge eight-pointed stars, with lighted candles in the center, are twirled constantly. The stars, hand-made and carefully decorated, are handed down from generation to generation, and are highly valued.²⁴

One of the oddest newspaper articles that appeared after people arrival at Wrangell told how two women, Mrs. Frank S. Barnes and her daughter Doris Ann, went to the Institute to sell insurance. They were astonished by two things. First, that Unanga had money. Second, that the first things they wanted insured were their home chapels and the items left in them. "It seemed rather foolish to me," wrote Doris Ann, "for them to insure for money something that was priceless, like



22 Smith with Petrivelli, *A Sure Foundation*, 45.

23 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, February 17, 1943:3.

24 *The Alaska Sportsman*.

the art work—but who am I to stand in the way of a policy sale?” She went on, “They say the Aleuts have very beautiful services out here on Saturday nights, so mother and I think we may go some evening and hear the music.”²⁵

Close proximity to Ketchikan provided employment possibilities not readily available to those in the other camps. It also made it easy for individuals to escape the camp by frequenting local bars and for bootleggers to sell alcohol in the camp itself. People who went into town and had a beer or two risked arrest. “Our people were put in jail and fined right and left,” recalled Dorofey Chercasen. “The Ketchikan City Police many times picked up us Aleuts for no reason. These were times when we would not even have had a single drink of liquor or beer. Other times were when we had some, but were not staggering nor drunk.” He concluded by remarking, “It was hard enough earning money to feed ourselves and our families without having it squeezed out of us by the law.”

Eva Borenin and her aunt Evdokia (Eva) Borenin at Wrangell Institute. Both died at Ward Lake and are buried at Ketchikan. National Archives.



There were cases of men arrested for domestic assault and battery after drinking sprees. The newspaper reported “drinking rampages” and “difficulties with soldiers.” As winter set in, alcohol abuse led to cases of exposure. Pauline Whitfield “was more or less the camp health aid,” according to Leonty Sovoroff. With minimal health care available, any illness—whether or not related to alcohol—became a serious threat. “We were not used to that weather down there,” said Luke Shelikoff. He blamed the high mortality rate on the dampness. “If they keep us on the dry camps probably we might be alright,” he said, “but where we stayed was swampy.”²⁶

Ward Lake became, in Kohlhoff’s words, “the second deadliest camp in Southeast, behind Killisnoo” where the Atkans were housed.²⁷ In July or August, the two Eva Borenins from Makushin were photographed in front of a tent at Wrangell Institute. The photographer wanted youth and age. Both women were dead within nine months. Elia’s wife died in her early sixties; his niece was about sixteen. They were not the first from Ward Lake to die. That had been thirteen-year-old Timothy Bezezekoff of Nikolski on September 14, 1942. He had been ill with tuberculosis for almost a year. By the end of the year, three other Nikolski people had died. Three children and three adults followed in 1943. Eight died in 1944. The total deaths from Nikolski numbered at least eighteen.

25 *The Wrangell Sentinel*, September 11, 1942:6.

26 Luke Shelikoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 184.

27 Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 128.

Akutan fared better, but Mark Petikoff's wife, Sophie, died in November 1942. Astonishingly, the Biorka people survived with no deaths, even though both Peter and Molly Lukanin were hospitalized for tuberculosis and each lost a lung.

The three elders of Kashega died within a year. Laressa "Susie" Yatchmenoff, the widow of the former chief, was first, dying in early April 1943. At the height of summer, in mid-August, Nikifer Denisoff passed away, the oldest of the Ward Cove evacuees. Efemia Kudrin, crippled with arthritis, survived until the beginning of May 1944.

Carl Borenin died in October 1944, not long after marrying Anna Mensoff of Akutan. Stricken with tuberculosis, Peter and Nellie Yatchmenoff were sent to the sanitarium in Sitka. They survived the evacuation, but Peter died in June 1947 and Nellie followed two years later. Each was interred in a bunker mausoleum reserved for TB victims, and their children were adopted by non-Native families.

Although Pete and Tatiana Olsen had secured permission to live in Wrangell almost as soon as they arrived, their son John was unable to escape the scourge of tuberculosis. He was sent to the Laurel Beach Sanitarium in Seattle where he died March 18, 1944. Pete Olsen traveled to Seattle and brought his body back for burial.

Irene Ermeloff of Biorka was a year younger than Irene Sovoroff of Nikolski, and they became friends at the camp. In May 1944 Irene Sovoroff sent for Nick Galaktionoff who was with the Unalaska people at Burnett Inlett. They had been romantically involved and she was pregnant with their child. Nick, now nineteen, had difficulty finding transportation, but he hitched a ride on the mailboat to Ketchikan. He arrived on May 29 and made his way to the camp where Irene Ermeloff met him. "I know you're looking for something," she said. After a while she added, "She's gone." Irene Sovoroff had died in childbirth and been buried with her infant four days earlier. Four years later, Nick would marry the other Irene. "Maybe that's what I was after," he said, "why I went there."²⁸

By May 1943 the mortality rate at the "Aleut colony" was noticeably high and was used as one of the arguments employed by some in Ketchikan to have the camp closed and the residents removed as a threat to public health. Or, if that were not possible, then to have the government construct a Native hospital in a nearby community. On May 19 Harry G. McCain, "Chairman on Police, Health, and Sanitation," wrote a virulent letter to Governor Ernest Gruening. He castigated the people as rotten with gonorrhoea and syphilis, honeycombed with tuberculosis, unsanitary, diseased, and obnoxious. "Even the wild animals, such as deer, fall under their scourge." He recommended isolating them or moving them to "a dead town" where they would no longer menace "established communities of white people."²⁹ Three days later he

28 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 184-185.

29 Harry G. McCain to Governor Ernest Gruening, May 19, 1943. *The Relocation and Internment of the Aleuts During World War II, Vol. III—Conditions at the Camps*. 1981:73-75.

wrote again, moderating his tone, but the damage had been done. At a city council meeting the next day, McCain made a motion to ask the governor “to either provide proper medical attention for the Aleuts at Ward Cove or endeavor to have them moved to another location.” Only one councilman voted against it. A letter was sent to Gruening.

The local paper briefly summarized comments by those present at the meeting, most of whom supported the refugees. Eugene Wacker was characteristically blunt and accused the council of using “high-handed proceedings” to kick the Aleuts out of their homes. Pauline Whitfield, Rev. George Beck, and Captain F.A. Zeusler all spoke of the deplorable conditions the refugees had faced and how dramatically living conditions in the camp differed from their homes in the Aleutians. Among those who expressed support was Hugh McGlashan of Akutan. This was Hugh Julian McGlashan, eldest son of the original McGlashan. On his way to Seattle for his first visit since 1909, he was traveling with his son Nick and his granddaughter Helen. He deplored the haste with which the people had been evacuated and said he was hurt when he read in the local paper that they were “a menace.” A longer article a few days later quoted him as saying “there were no finer citizens any place than the Aleuts; that honest and thriftiness was ingrained in them and that no Aleut ever went back on his word.”³⁰

The paper also carried a letter from Mark Petikoff, the chief of Akutan and recognized leader of the Ward Lake residents. “Many of our men are already in the armed forces,” he wrote.

Others are employed in and around Ketchikan and buying their share of war bonds. We did not come to Ward Cove of our own will, but fell in readily with war plans of those over us, and we now demand the same treatment as any other group of citizens, and are not asking any special favors.³¹

Despite the impending invasion of Attu in 1943, the fur seal harvest in the Pribilofs became a priority for the Fish and Wildlife Service. A crew of 151 men assembled at Funter Bay on May 6, 1943, including men from Ward Cove. Once on the Pribilof Islands, the crew was expanded by nine St. Paul men who had been serving in the army. The seal harvest was the largest on record. George Gordaoff of Kashega had joined the army by this time and he was sent to Attu, arriving after the May 1943 battle was over but in time to be sent out with a team to find and bury the decomposing bodies of dead Japanese soldiers.³² George Kudrin also served in the Aleutians.

The workers sent to the Pribilof Islands returned to southeast Alaska, and by the spring of 1944 arrangements had been made for the St. Paul and St. George

30 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, June 7, 1943:3.

31 *The Alaska Fishing News*, Ketchikan, May 21, 1943:5.

32 Quoted in Arnold, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan*, 112-113.

people to return home. They left Funter Bay on May 4 aboard the army transport ship *William L. Thompson* along with men from the other camps again hired as temporary workers. From the three villages the men included Carl Borenin, Sergie Borenin, Cornelius Kudrin, Sergie Kudrin, George Borenin, Nick Borenin, Akenfa Ermeloff, Mike Kudrin, Peter Lukanin, and Willie Yatchmenoff.³³ Akenfa or “Candy” Ermeloff, a son of Alex Ermeloff, was not originally listed among the evacuees, but he had joined his family by this time.

That same spring, pollution was discovered seeping into Ward Lake, halting recreational swimming for Ketchikan residents. The pollution was blamed on overcrowding at the camp where 142 residents used sanitation facilities designed for not more than 65. To help correct this situation, according to Kohlhoff, 46 people from Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin were sent to Burnett Inlet in late May. Kohlhoff does not say whether they volunteered to leave or were selected for removal. Nor does he comment on the impact so many arrivals had on an already crowded Burnett Inlet. This was, he wrote, “the only action of its kind in the whole [evacuation] episode.”³⁴ The source for this transfer, a report submitted to Governor Gruening, is rife with errors and ambiguity.³⁵ A non-existent Peter Dirks is said to be the former chief of Atka. Charles and Alice Hope of Unalaska are said to be “one of the most influential couples in the Nikolski community” while William Zaharoff, chief of Unalaska, and Anfesia Shapsnikoff, also of Unalaska, are identified as Nikolski leaders. The letter gives no date for the transfer from Ward Lake to Burnett; in fact, it implies that in the case of Kashega this may have been done at the time of the evacuation.

The collected testimony from Burnett Inlet evacuees never mentioned this arrival of people from the three villages. Recent direct inquiries produced no memories of the event. In fact, when Mary Diakanoff was asked if Andrew Makarin had moved into Burnett, she emphatically answered, “No.” Andrew was well-known and an important leader in the church. His arrival would have made an impression. I suspect that the letter sent to Gruening was either a case of a proposed plan that was never carried out, or, more simply, a case of an overworked official confusing facts and allowing his ignorance to masquerade as fact.



George Gordaoff.
Photograph courtesy
Mary Diakanoff.

33 NARA, Pribilof Islands Logbooks, 1870-1961, St. Paul, Funter, Alaska. April 28, 1944.

34 Kohlhoff, *When the Wind Was a River*, 130.

35 George A. Dale to Governor Ernest Gruening. May 13, 1944. Alaska State Archives. RG 101, box 571.

APPLICATION FOR PERMIT TO ENTER ZONE B OF THE
TERRITORY OF ALASKA

I submit the following as an indorsement for the issuance of this permit:

1. Name (Print or Type) Alice Mary Moller
 (First) (Middle, in Full) (Last)
 Permanent address Unalakleet Alaska
 (Number) (Street) (City) (State)
 Also known as (or registered under Selective Service as): Alice Mary Moller
 (female applicants give maiden name also)

2. I will be accompanied by the following children under 16 years of age: 4

3. Citizen or subject of United States Alien Reg. No. _____
 (Name of Country)
 Naturalization Cert. No. _____ Place _____ Country of former citizenship _____

4. Father's name John Moller Alut-Quas Kashega, Alaska
 (Full Name) (Nationality-Descent) (Place of Birth)
 5. Mother's first and maiden name Peckla Moller Alut-Quas Cashoon, Ala
 (Name) (Nationality-Descent) (Place of Birth)

6. Domestic Status: Single Married Widowed Divorced Separated
 Husband's name or wife's maiden name Carl Moller Unalaska
 (Name) (No., Street) (City) (State) (Husband's Employer)
 IF husband or any other member of the immediate family is stationed in Alaska as a member of the armed forces, give his name, rank, and mailing address _____

7. I intend to enter Zone B of Alaska at Unalaska for the following reasons: Resident
 Employed by _____ (City or Region) Alaska
 (Employer, Government, or other) (Occupation) (Date) (Date)

8. Past Major Occupation _____ from _____ to _____
 (Occupation) (Date) (Date)

9. Selective Service Board No. _____ at _____ (City) (State)
 Residence given in Registration _____ (Street) (City) (State)
 Classification _____ Order No. _____ Social Security No. 578-3445-01



Sex Female Age 12 Date of Birth Feb. 6, 1932
 Place of Birth Unalaska (City) (State) (County)
 Race Alut Nationality Alut-Quas
 Height 4'11" Complexion Fair Hair Blond
 Weight 75 Eyes Blue Build Slender
 Scars and marks None

The undersigned declares: I am the applicant named herein. I am not a person whose entrance into Alaska is prohibited by Par. 2 of the Regulations and Instructions stated on the reverse side of this application. I further declare that this application has been fully examined and is understood by me, and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, is a true and correct statement of facts. I further understand that I am subject to the penalties as provided by the laws of the United States of America for making a false statement of facts in this application.

Alice M Moller
 (Signature of applicant)



This application was signed in the presence of and witnessed by the undersigned authorized representative of the Commanding General, Alaskan Department.

OFFICIAL - ZONE B ALASKA TRAVEL CONTROL
 (Signature of authorized representative)
 At Burnett Falls
 (Rank and Title)

PERMIT TO ENTER ZONE B OF ALASKA
 (Subject to regulations and instructions on the back hereof)

Date 3-23-45 Applicant above-named is authorized to enter Alaska for the reasons set out in paragraph 7 hereof. When properly indorsed, this permit will be valid for travel within or departure from Zone B of Alaska.

Date 23 March, 1945 By authority of the COMMANDING GENERAL
 Alaskan Department
 ALASKA TRAVEL CONTROL
 (Signature of Nicholas V. Muff)
 NICHOLAS V. MUFF (Officer in Charge)
 7/62 Alaska Travel Control

(This permit not valid unless it bears the seal of Alaska Travel Control and signature of an authorized representative of the Commanding General, Alaskan Department.)

Alice Moller's permit to return to Unalaska. Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.

Back in the Aleutians, the war had entered a holding pattern. The Aleutian Campaign officially lasted from June 10, 1942, to August 15, 1943, during which approximately one thousand men had died or were missing in action. The combined American and Canadian force had numbered 144,000 at its peak.³⁶ Attu had been retaken at the cost of practically all its Japanese defenders; the Japanese force on Kiska had escaped what their government called “an honorable death” by slipping away while the island was shrouded in fog. For the thousands of U.S. troops stationed across the Chain, the months dragged on. “All we did on Umnak was wait,” one soldier remembered. “Nothing ever happened. Our only enemy was the weather.”³⁷

At Unalaska, the non-Native city council continued wrangling over liquor licenses and electrical power, while making and warding off personal attacks. Harry Jacobsen, who voted in the city election on April 4, died on September 2, 1944, of cerebral thrombosis and pneumonia. He was 74 and was survived by a niece in Seattle. No minutes exist for council meetings between 1944 and 1947. A school board, however, was organized in June 1944, with the expectation that families would be returning soon.

Slowly and gradually, the evacuation that had been done with such haste was undone. Repatriating the Chain was more complex than the relatively easy return of people to St. Paul and St. George. There were bureaucratic delays, but by the end of February 1945 plans were ready. In March the residents of Ward Lake, Burnett Inlet, and Killisnoo were photographed, fingerprinted and issued travel permits that allowed entry into Zone B of the Territory of Alaska. Alice Moller’s permit named her father, John Denisoff of Kashega, and her mother, Feckla Burenin of Chernofski. She would accompany four children under 16 years of age and enter Zone B at Unalaska. She was married, a housewife, a resident, a female, an Aleut. After pressing her inked right thumb to the form, she signed the paper on March 23, 1945.³⁸

Before long, the buildings at Ward Lake were torn down and the lumber given to Saxman village near Ketchikan. On Sunday, April 15, the army transport *David S. Branch* began boarding passengers at the Ketchikan dock. Mark Petikoff, the Akutan chief, had been hospitalized in Ketchikan with pneumonia. He was brought to the ship by a doctor and a nurse and immediately taken to the ship’s infirmary where he was made comfortable just before the ship pulled anchor and departed. The residents of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin were heading home.



Blueberry Rain (Alice Moller’s House, Unalaska).

36 Cloe, *The Aleutian Warriors*, 321.

37 Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Five*, 136.

38 Copy provided by AB Rankin, July 2009.



George Borenin at Kashega holding a kamleika. University of Alaska Anchorage, Ted Bank Collection, circa 1954.

Chapter 18

The Return



The most dramatic account of the voyage back to the islands appears in a letter Marion V. Benedict wrote.¹ She was a “special assistant” assigned to Akutan; that is, she was the village school-teacher. Just as the *Branch* was about to sail on April 15, George Dushkin approached her and her husband and requested a telegram be sent to the administrator of the church in Sitka, Archimandrite John Zlobin, to pray for them while they traveled.² Benedict was impressed by this request. “Did I ever tell you,” she wrote, “these are the nicest people we have ever worked with? They had burned their altar from the church at Ward Lake and were taking the ashes with them to be buried under the church in their own village.”

As a matter of fact, Zlobin had written to Anfesia Shapsnikoff at Burnett Inlet on April 9. “Also I calling on you and your children,” he wrote in halting English, “Bless of God befor you move from Burnett Inlet and during you move from Burnett all way till you come to Unalaska, let God and Mother of God help you and save you....”³ In a postscript he sent a blessing to the church committee and to the entire congregation.

Despite the illness of Chief Mark Petikoff, joy pervaded the ship as it pulled away from Ketchikan. Children flooded the decks and explored every cabin and corner, to the alarm of the captain who soon arranged to have certain areas made off limits. Unanga assisted preparing and serving meals and helping with other chores. When the *Branch* arrived at Burnett Inlet about 7 a.m. Monday morning, the Coast Guard began transporting people out to the vessel. A coffin

1 Copy from Jeff Dickrell. NARA, RG 75. Marion V. Benedict to Don Foster, June 15, 1945.

2 Kohloff wrote that April 15, 1945, was Easter Sunday. However, Orthodox Easter 1945 fell on May 5 (or April 23 in the Julian calendar). Western Easter fell on April 1.

3 Archimandrite John Zlobin to Anfesia Shapsnikoff, April 9, 1945. Anfesia Shapsnikoff collection.

with the body of Martha Newell was lifted aboard for its journey home. Benedict noted that a few people carried small trees, their roots carefully wrapped. That evening was filled with songs, from *The Old Rugged Cross* to *Don't Fence Me In*.

Tuesday at Killisnoo, the Atkans joined the passengers. In the evening the movie *Little Old New York* was shown, and by noon the next day the *Branch* was on the open sea. Blackouts were enforced at night; smoking was not allowed on deck. That night “we heard that Ernie Pyle had been killed,” Benedict wrote. “Then we remembered for a little while that we were at war.” The rough waters sent a few to bed with seasickness. For Philemon Tutiakoff and others, the death of President Roosevelt on April 12 still weighed heavily.⁴

On Saturday they entered the Bering Sea. People “hung over the rail looking for the first glimpse of Akutan, which was the first village we would come to,” she wrote. “We felt their excitement as they sighted Akutan Island.” The church came into view as they entered the bay. A crew of men went ashore first, followed soon afterwards by the Akutan people along with those from Makushin, Biorka, and Kashega. It had been decided that people from the three villages would not return to their home villages—at least not immediately. Crates and boxes of belongings were “piled helter-skelter all over the beach.” The weather all day Saturday was “lovely and sunny” and the homecoming should have been joyous. As people entered their homes, however, they saw the ravages delivered by three years without care or maintenance. Compounding this was the theft of personal property. After church services on Sunday, the *Branch* left the harbor about 1:15 in the afternoon. Mark Petikoff was still aboard as it had been decided he should go to Unalaska for medical attention. The people at Unalaska would find even greater looting and destruction. The Atkans would find ashes.

Over the next few days and weeks, the Akutan people scrambled to repair their homes. The supplies that had been brought were quickly used up as was anything serviceable found on the beach. On May 23 word arrived from the military hospital at Dutch Harbor that Mark Petikoff had died from heart disease and pneumonia. His body was brought home for burial.

Official reports are silent about the families from the three villages. Where did they live? How did those who remained at Akutan integrate into the community? Elia Borenin, the chief and starosta of Makushin, survived the war and in 1945 he was nearing fifty-five. Having served in the choir at Ward Cove, he chose to remain where he could participate in services at the Chapel of St. Alexander Nevsky.⁵ Its modest size reminded him of the Chapel of the Nativity waiting with its icons and furnishings at Makushin. He preferred Akutan to Unalaska, still swollen with a military presence. Two new homes were constructed and one of

4 Tutiakoff in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish One*, 55.

5 Lydia Borenin Vincler, conversation with Ray Hudson, August 29, 2012.

these was for Elia and his two adopted sons, Nick and Akenfa (Matfey).⁶ Akenfa would not live long and he died at sixteen. Nick Borenin and Marie Petikoff traveled to Unalaska to be married. Their family became an integral part of Akutan. The boys' younger sister, Matrona, had returned with them from Ward Lake but, ill with tuberculosis, she was soon sent to the sanitarium in Sitka. Once cured, she stayed in Southeast to attend school. She eventually married Vincent Abloogalook of Nome and settled in that region.



Makushin after the war.
Alice Moller Collection,
courtesy AB Rankin.

Of the residents of Makushin who had left the village before the war, some—the Lekanoffs and Galaktionoffs—returned to Unalaska while a few remained in Southeast. The lives of the three widows of 1937 varied greatly. Natalia Borenin had succumbed to tuberculosis in 1941. Parascovia “Polly” Galaktionoff had married Innokentii Borenin in 1938 and become part of the Unalaska evacuation. She died in Juneau shortly after people returned from Southeast. After Valentina “Tina” Borenin was widowed, her son Ignaty had been adopted by her brother and his wife, John and Angelina Hapoff, in St. Paul. Valentina married Simeon Petikoff (originally from Makushin) at Unalaska in 1938. This marriage did not last and when the war began and the *Delarof* arrived at Dutch Harbor with her relatives from St. Paul, she went aboard. She remained with them at Funter Bay for only a short time before moving to Burnett Inlet with the Unalaska people. After the war she settled at St. Paul where she died in 1989 at the age of 74.

Tatiana and Pete Olsen remained in Wrangell where she died from burns in a house fire in November 1948. He became “a familiar Wrangell personage” and

6 Luke Shelikoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 184.

died from coronary thrombosis in February 1954.⁷ Neither ever returned to the Aleutians nor was Olsen able to secure compensation for his lost sheep ranch.

The residents of Kashega were scattered. Peter and Nellie Yatchmenoff were terminally ill with tuberculosis and died in 1947 and 1949 while still at the sanitarium in Sitka. Not long after arriving at Akutan, George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin made their way to Unalaska. It was closer to Kashega and they had dreams of reestablishing the village. But younger families would be needed if resettlement were to succeed and the younger generation saw possibilities elsewhere. George Gordaoff was serving in the military. This would lead to a maritime career after he married and settled in Cordova. The children of Efemia Kudrin remained in Akutan and were soon woven into the fiber of that community. According to Olga Kudrin, who married John Mensoff, Sr., her family intended to go to Nikolski when they learned they couldn't return to Kashega, but her "brother Mike signed us up for Akutan"⁸ George Kudrin arrived in Akutan two years after the resettlement because he served in the army until May 1947. In 1952, while fishing on the west side of Unalaska, he visited Kashega. The church with all its icons and furnishings was still in good condition.⁹ He married Anesia Mensoff but his two brothers—Sergie and Michael—remained single. Michael spent several years in Southeast Alaska before returning to Akutan for his final years. Peter Kudrin, now divorced, never remarried. Carl Borenin had also married during the evacuation—to Anna Mensoff of Akutan—but he had died in October 1944 and she returned to Akutan alone. Sophie Kudrin stayed at Akutan only a month or two before she went to Unalaska to find work. That same summer her daughter Eva married John Tcheripanoff of Akutan but they began spending more and more time near Sophie, settling for good at Unalaska in 1957. Sergie Borenin, the somewhat elusive resident of Kashega, had married Kleopatra (Clara) Kochutin of St. Paul Island and, if he returned to the islands, it was not for long.

George Borenin and Cornelius Kudrin eventually returned to Kashega. At first, they merely visited, inspected buildings, and made certain that the church was secure.¹⁰ Based on the December 13, 1948, entry in the diary of Milt Holmes, supplied by Cora Holmes, the two men had established permanent residence by 1948. In 1954 Ted P. Bank II from the University of Michigan made an archaeological reconnaissance of western Unalaska Island. In mid-August he and his crew visited Makushin. "The tattered, rain-soaked wooden buildings," he wrote, "including the old Russian church, stood in the gathering fog like specters out of the past, the wind whistling through them—an eerie Aleutian ghost town." As they approached Kashega the next evening, they expected to find the same desolation. Out from among "the ramshackle buildings of Kashega village," however, came George Borenin to meet them. "To our surprise, as we pulled in to the cobble beach," he wrote, "an Aleut stepped from the shadows and directed us

7 Information from Pat Roppel and Rachel Mason, e-mail September 1, 2012.

8 Olga Mensoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 181.

9 George Kudrin in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 175.

10 Walter Dyakanoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 9, 2004.

to a good anchorage.” Borenin helped the anthropologist in other ways, describing Split Rock where mummies had been found in 1928 and showing him the locations of ten village sites, including three of good size.



George Borenin visiting Carl Moller at Unalaska, 1946. Photograph courtesy Ray Hudson.

George Borenin... was waiting hopefully, with almost child-like faith, for the day when people would return and live in the empty, ghostly houses he watched over. As we got to know George better in the days that followed, we discovered that he was a remarkably brave and deeply religious person. Even if people didn't return to Kashega, he had decided to remain so that the small community church would be cared for. Once a week, on Saturdays, he held services with only the wind to join him in chanting the liturgy and only the shadows as congregation. He confided to us that one fear plagued his mind, that of dying alone where no one would find him and no one would bury him.¹¹

Bank photographed the last chief in the church and before a large radio that he used to communicate with Dutch Harbor. By 1956, after living alone for some time, he was joined by Cornelius Kudrin.¹² According to Alfred Stepetin, the two men used earnings from the Pribilofs to buy needed supplies and materials.¹³ Popular rumor had it that a feud developed between them and that each would row his own dory out to the mailboat when it arrived. Cornelius returned to

11 Bank, "The Past Ages of Unalaska," 36.

12 *The Mailboat Monitor*, September 1956.

13 Stepetin, Alfred. January 21, 1988. Elders in Residence Program Collection. Oral History Collection of the Alaska and Polar Regions Department. Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

Unalaska first, settling in a small house the Kudrins provided. He died in April 1964. During one of his trips to Unalaska, George fell ill and was sent to the Alaska Native Hospital in Anchorage.¹⁴ He returned, but failing health gradually forced him to move to Unalaska permanently. Jenabe and Elaine Caldwell gave him the use of a small cabin across the street from where his niece Eva Tcheripanoff lived. The church was now clearly in danger of being plundered by fishermen. Father Basil Nagoski had arrived at Unalaska in October 1960 as the first permanent priest since the war. He was energetic, systematic, and deeply devoted to the people. He arranged to visit Kashega where he collected the chapel's icons and placed them in the Church of the Holy Ascension. In February 1965 George Borenin again entered the Anchorage hospital. He died there on June 8 and was buried at Unalaska.

George Borenin inside the Kashega chapel. photograph by Ted P. Bank II, uaa-hmc-0068-series16-f7-12 Bank.



14 *The Mailboat Monitor*, November 1956.

In the early 1980s John Moller, a grandson of Alice Moller, stopped at Kashega while fishing on the *Shellfish*. The church had collapsed and the cupola was lying in the high grass. “I rolled it down the beach, towed it to the fishing boat,” he wrote. He and his crew “lifted it aboard with the crane. You should of seen the *Shellfish* coming into Unalaska Bay with this big cross standing with authority on the bow.”¹⁵

It is possible to date the resettlement of Biorka to the summer or fall of 1945. Marion and Harry Benedict opened school at Akutan on September 4. They had nine boys and nine girls identified as Aleut along with three who were listed as white (Nick McGlashan, Helen McGlashan Gilbert, and Axel Svenson). By the end of May when the term ended, three of the students had withdrawn. Margaret Yatchmenoff, age 12, Fedey Yatchmenoff, age 13, and Irene Makarin, age 14, had “moved to Biorka.”¹⁶

Having seen the condition of homes at Akutan, the Biorka people must have worried about their own village. They had cause to expect the worst. In late summer 1944, Simeon Oliver had joined two geologists on Sedanka. His book *Son of the Smoky Sea*, about being raised at Unalaska in the Jesse Lee Home, had been published the year before. “The little village was a sorrowful sight to me,” he wrote in a sequel, *Back to the Smoky Sea*, “for the natives had been evacuated and the houses stood broken and empty with indications of having been ransacked. The church was intact and had been boarded up.”



The little native village there was a picture of desolation. When the natives were suddenly evacuated they left many of their goods behind. Their looted houses were almost lost in two seasons’ growth of petrusky and the long, coarse grasses that were reclaiming the village to the wilderness. The island was swarming with foxes that had been planted there in peace-time and had not been trapped since the war began. They had eaten everything imaginable, even the hide coverings of the bidarkis, which lay like skeletons on the beach. The foxes had made themselves at home in the deserted houses, tearing up furniture and beds in their voracious search, breaking open the pillows and scattering feathers everywhere. Biorka won’t be a nice place for my Aleut friends to come home to.¹⁷

Icon from the Kashega Chapel iconostasis. This icon can be seen *in situ* in photograph on preceding page between the holy doors. National Park Service.

15 John Moller, e-mail to Ray Hudson, December 22, 2011. The cupola was placed inside the churchyard. Plans to enclose it in a small memorial were never finalized and it eventually made its way to the city landfill.
16 NARA RG 75. School Census of Indian Children, Akutan, Alaska, May 23, 1942.
17 Nutchuk, *Back to the Smoky Sea*, 216-217.

George Borenin at his table in Kashega. Photograph by Ted P. Bank II, courtesy Ray Hudson.



Nevertheless, it was home, and the Biorka people were determined to re-establish it. As with so much of the story about these three villages, Nick Galaktionoff is our primary source. He told how Andrew Makarin and Alex Ermeloff took a dory from Akutan to Biorka. After making an inspection of the village, they crossed to Ugadaga, hiked into Unalaska, and stayed with Andrew's brother, Elia. They approached Verne Robinson, the U.S. deputy marshal. Verne, in turn, went to see a military official who promised a power barge. Andrew and Alex returned to Akutan—only after stopping at the Unalga Island outpost to explain who they were. The barge eventually arrived and took the people with their few possessions to Sedanka Island. Once set ashore, Nick said, they were pretty much forgotten.

“There was no help, nothing, no lumber, no groceries,” Nick said.¹⁸

And, he might have added, no real knowledge of conditions on the part of government employees. An example of this is found in a letter George A. Dale, the director of education for the Alaska Native Service, wrote to Ted Bank II in 1948. “It happened that I participated in the planning and carrying out of the rehabilitation of these people in the Islands,” he began, “and I can now advise that there are now communities of Aleuts at Atka, Nikolski, Unalaska, and Akutan.” So far, so good; but then he added a sentence with no basis in fact: “There are smaller groups and scattered families at such locations as Makushin, Kashega, Biorka, Chernofski and other points west of Unalaska.”¹⁹

¹⁸ Nick Galaktionoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 3, 1993.

¹⁹ George A. Dale to Ted Bank II, May 28, 1948. Archives and Special Collections Department, University of Alaska Anchorage, Theodore Paul Bank, II, Papers. HMC-0068, Series 2, Folder 3.

Andrew traveled to Unalaska again, probably after the decommissioning of the Unalga outpost, and received permission to salvage lumber from the island. He tried to persuade Paul and Alice Tutiakoff to move to the smaller village, but they remained at Unalaska. Using the material from Unalga, people further strengthened and repaired their homes. A new house was constructed for Peter and Molly Lukanin. The next summer, when the men traveled to St. Paul to work in the seal harvest, the women and children came to Unalaska. After sealing was over, the families returned to Biorka. That winter, with one of the heaviest snowfalls in memory, the men trapped cross and silver fox for which they received between \$30 and \$40 each.

On April 1, 1946, Nick was at Ugadaga Bay with Ruff Ermeloff, Andrew Makarin, William “Coco” Yatchmenoff, and Akenfa “Candy” Ermeloff.²⁰ They were collecting coal that had been left behind by the military. The tide came in and went out several times. When their dory was left high and dry, the men rushed to load the coal before the tide returned. Nick was puzzled, but Ruff knew what was going on and just kept laughing. An earthquake, now measured at a magnitude of 8.6, had struck south of Unimak Island, generating a tsunami that wiped away the Scotch Cap Lighthouse, killing the five attendants. It then traveled south to do extensive damage in the Hawaiian Islands and along the Pacific Coast. When the men returned to Biorka, “it was like something had been pounding the houses,” Nick said. Later he hiked over to the Pacific side of Sedanka Island and found logs 100 to 150 feet up in the hills. At least two sand spits had vanished.²¹

In 1947 Irene Makarin married William Yatchmenoff. It was an arranged marriage that took the concerted efforts of the entire village to complete; and, despite Irene’s objections and delays, it lasted many years.²² By the time Biorka was resettled, Peter and Molly Lukanin’s son Moses had been adopted into the extended Makarin family. With both Peter and Molly undergoing treatment for tuberculosis while in Southeast Alaska, it became impossible for them to care for their son. Elia and Agrafina Makarin were prepared to adopt him, but when it came time to formally sign the papers, Agrafina could not write her name. Her daughter, Myria, stepped in, signed the papers, and became Moses’ adoptive mother. His first memory of meeting his birth parents was when he was thirteen.²³



Cornelius Kudrin (left) and George Borenin at Chernofski ranch. ASL H. D. Catron Collection, Cap160-08.

20 “Candy” Ermeloff died June 3, 1951, at Unalaska, at the age of 39. He had been married to Kathryn Yatchmenoff [Tutiakoff], daughter of Helen Golley and John Yatchmenoff II of Kashega. Murray, *Mini-biographies*.

21 Nick Galaktionoff, conversation with Ray Hudson, June 3, 1993.

22 Irene Makarin in *The Beginning of Memory*, 197-198.

23 Moses Gordieff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 206-207.

Nick Galaktionoff spent three years at Biorka after the war. In 1948 he married Irene Ermeloff. Although this marriage was not arranged, he had to ask Alex Ermeloff's permission.²⁴ Their first child, a son, did not live long and was



Moses Gordieff at a bentwood hat workshop at Camp Qungaayux̄. Photograph by David Gregory.

buried at Biorka.²⁵ Nick preferred life in the village over life at Unalaska. The people at Biorka, he said, didn't make much money, but they got by all right.²⁶ One summer he chose to forego sealing at St. Paul and instead helped catch, dry, salt, and smoke fish that was then brought to Unalaska for sale to troops who were still at the base. Anna Jean Bereskin, Irene and William Yatchmenoff's eldest daughter, remembered playing on the beach at Biorka with her younger sister Kathy, whom she pestered. She recalled looking up and seeing the gray houses standing nearby. She also remembered the hike from Ugadaga Bay into Unalaska. She recalled the steep climb and how she, her sister Kathy, and Johnny Ermeloff would play along the way. "I guess because we knew how long the trail was," she wrote.²⁷

Undoubtedly this hike was one of the deciding factors when people weighed the pros and cons of living at Biorka. The military had used the trail during the war as a route to the outpost just outside Ugadaga Bay. They had run a communications line along it. After the war, the route from the bay to the summit still followed a narrow winding trail, but the hike down into town was now on one of the roads that veined Unalaska Valley.

Nick Galaktionoff recalled that George Yatchmenoff, William's father, was the first Biorka resident to move permanently to Unalaska. "He came here and found a house right away," Nick said. "He didn't even tell Andrew he was moving, but went back to Biorka and got his wife and children and came here."²⁸ George was followed by Alex Ermeloff. "Alex said that if he were younger he could do this," Nick said, referring to the arduous difficulty of supplying food to the village. "But as he was now older, it was too hard.... Then, too, if you had children and they became sick, there was no one who could treat them." About a year later, Alex's son, Ruff Ermeloff, moved to Unalaska and finally Peter and Molly Lukanin came. There was never a school at Biorka. Even at Unalaska, where the population was much larger, staffing the school after the war was difficult.

Not long after people began moving away, Biorka was hit by a storm that destroyed some of the houses and weakened the church. This was likely the storm that struck on March 10, 1952. John Fletcher of Unalaska wrote that it was the most violent one he had seen in over twenty-five years. People watched

24 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 125. Irene Galaktionoff died in 1967.

25 Murray, Mini-biographies.

26 Nick Galaktionoff, recorded April 7, 1976.

27 Anna Jean Bereskin, e-mail to Ray Hudson, March 3, 2012.

28 Galaktionoff, Nick, "Memories of Biorka," in Hudson, ed., *Cuttlefish Two*, 63.

cabanas “turning over and over, then falling apart and blowing completely off the island and into the sea.” Fletcher wrote that, “the wind tower at the Dutch Harbor air weather station across the bay was torn off when the blow reached 140 m.p.h., so the top speed remains a mystery.” The upper end of Unalaska Valley—that is, the area where the pass leads down to Ugadaga Bay, “was minus 21 buildings by actual count after the storm. In some instances the ground was completely cleared down to bare earth.”²⁹ Another observer noted, “Hundreds of buildings were blown off their foundations or collapsed.”³⁰

When Biorka people made a trip back to Sedanka, they found that wind had damaged the church and blown gravel up to the level of the windows.³¹ The Lukanins’ new home had been lifted off the ground, hurled across the bank and into the sea. Half of George Yatchmenoff’s home—actually more of a duplex—was in the bay while a good part of the Makarin home was destroyed. Only Alex and Ruff Ermeloff’s homes were intact. There would be no resettlement.

Although the former residents of the three villages continued to identify with their home villages, they began a slow integration into the broader Unalaska community. This was reflected in their participation in the life of the Church of the Holy Ascension. Alex Ermeloff and Andrew Makarin joined a series of local people who read services in the absence of a priest. Nick Lekanoff, after an apprenticeship following his move to Unalaska before the war, became third starosta in 1948 and second starosta in 1952.³² When repairs were made on the church immediately after the war, Andrew Makarin played a significant role. According to Tracy Tutiakoff, when the roof and bell tower were repaired Andrew Makarin and William Dyakanoff gave directions from the ground below while younger men did the actual carpentry. When the cupola over the altar was replaced, Andrew Makarin cut the intricate pieces prior to their assembly.³³

Icons from the three village chapels eventually graced the walls of the Unalaska church. In the summer of 1945, Nick Lekanoff and other men had fished at Makushin; and, when the season was over, they brought icons from the chapel to Unalaska. An icon of the Resurrection above the Royal Doors in the main nave at Unalaska may have come from Biorka although most of the Biorka icons went to Dillingham after the church there burned.

At Unalaska (left to right): William Dyakanoff, Andrew Makarin, Father Baranoff, Philemon Tutiakoff, John Golodoff. Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.



29 Fletcher, John, “The Big Blow,” *The N.C. Company Flag*, Northern Commercial Company, June 1952.

30 *Totem Telegraph*, August 1952:2.

31 Nick Galaktionoff in *The Beginning of Memory*, 131-132.

32 Nick Lekanoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1039.

33 Tracy Tutiakoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1053.

Six small icons from Kashega now reside on the iconostas in the St. Innokentii Chapel, one of two side chapels in the Church of the Holy Ascension. More Kashega icons adorn the walls of this church.³⁴

A real and personal property list prepared in January 1954 by E.E. Hortman, the Unalaska city assessor, listed several former residents of the three villages. A subsequent list two years later reflected how thoroughly these villagers had settled into Unalaska. From Biorka, the people included Feddie Yatchmenoff, William and Irene Yatchmenoff, Nick and Irene Galaktionoff, and Molly Lukanin. Although neither Andrew and Eustina Makarin nor Alex Ermeloff were included in the 1956 list, they were also now at Unalaska. The Makarins lived with Coco and Irene Yatchmenoff and their growing family. Andrew's grandchildren called him Kia.³⁵



A calendar painting of the Church of the Holy Ascension given by George Borenin to Ray Hudson, 1965. Image courtesy Ray Hudson.

In addition to the Biorka families, the 1956 assessor's list included Sergie Borenin, Peter and Augusta Galaktionoff, Mike and Dora Kudrin, Arthur Lekanoff, Constantine and Helen Lekanoff, Maria Lekanoff, Nick Lekanoff, Timonty Lekanoff, Molly Lukanin, and Sophie Pletnikoff. (Sophie Kudrin had married Simeon Pletnikoff on December 28, 1949. She was forty; he was ten years her junior. It was one of the shortest marriages on record, and all she kept from the marriage was his name.) Several of these families were provided housing by subdividing a large parcel on the eastern end of the village into eleven "undeeded" lots. Cabanas were hauled down from abandoned military enclaves

³⁴ Nick Lekanoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 1058.

³⁵ Anna Jean Bereskin, e-mail to Ray Hudson, March 1, 2012.

and set up in two rows. Referred to as “New Town” these small dwellings became homes for people from Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. Eventually, after the land was transferred to the city by the Bureau of Land Management and the Townsite Trustee, residents were able to purchase deeds for \$40.00. Molly Lukanin was the first to send in her money order. On November 6, 1964, the first set of deeds went out to her, Mike Kudrin, and Elsie Yatchmenoff.



The last chief of Biorka, Alex Ermeloff, died in early November 1957 and was buried in the Unalaska churchyard. *The Mailboat Monitor*, a small somewhat gossipy monthly newspaper published by its captain, Nels Thompson, noted:

Mrs. Agatha Ermeloff returned from the hospital in Anchorage just in time to attend the funeral of her father-in-law Chief Alexa [sic] Ermaloff, one of three lay readers in the Russian Orthodox church here. He is survived by his son Ruff and family, and daughters Elsie and Dora. His funeral was held Nov. 5.³⁶

Men in their National Guard uniforms. Left to right: John Borenin, Kusta Lekanoff, William “Coco” Yatchmenoff, Simeon Lekanoff, and Moses Gordieff. Photograph courtesy Jennie Lekanoff.

The weather was unusually warm the winter of 1958-1959. Ducks and geese wintered in Unalaska Bay. Sea lions came in and whales were seen surfacing in the mouth of the bay. “Andrew Makarin, honored lay reader at the Russian

³⁶ *The Mailboat Monitor*. December 1957:3.

Cathedral in Unalaska, is an inveterate duck hunter, and seldom misses a shot on the wing,” wrote John Valentine in a newsletter for the Northern Commercial Company, the successor of the Alaska Commercial Company at Unalaska.

On this occasion, Andrew fired from his rocking boat, and nailed a duck. But while the duck was still flapping in mid-air, a huge American eagle swooped out of nowhere, snatched the duck, and calmly lit on the beach. Andrew had already turned his boat into shore, and beaching it, leaped after the duck-snatcher with boots flapping and gun waving. By effortless short flight the canny eagle kept just ahead of Andrew’s flailing arms, tantalizing him down the whole length of beach. Andrew hollered to spectator John [Valentine] for aid, but just as John protested bare hands were no match for the big bird, the eagle decided he’d played enough and headed off for the mountain with his purloined dinner.³⁷



1963

Alfred Stepetin and Carl Moller at Unalaska, 1953. Alice Moller Collection, courtesy AB Rankin.

Andrew’s role at the church took on added importance after Father Nagoski was transferred to Japan where he served as bishop in Tokyo. Andrew shared church duties with Anfesia Shapsnikoff, and when he became ill in June 1963 and was transported by air to Anchorage, Anfesia had Nick Lekanoff send a wire alerting Father Simeon Oskolkoff.³⁸ Andrew was diagnosed with asthma and returned to resume his duties, sometimes alone, sometimes with Anfesia or her son Philemon. He baptized numerous children and conducted funeral services. He assisted Ishmael Gromoff when the new priest held his first service on May 3, 1966.

Until Eustina’s health declined, Andrew and his wife would occasionally return to Biorka for a week or two. Michael Swetzof recalls going with them to the top of the pass and then leaving them as they hiked down the trail to Ugadaga Bay and to the skiff they used to cross to the village.³⁹ Andrew returned to Biorka one last time in 1965 to dismantle the church and build a

small square protective structure over the site of the altar. The remaining wood was burned. Among the artifacts recovered from Biorka in later years was a handwritten copy Andrew Makarin had made of *A Brief Guide to a Pious Life* [Kratkoe praviol dlya blagochestivoi zhizni], one of the more obscure religious works published in Unangam tunuu in the early 20th century. Written in Andrew’s fine cursive hand, the manuscript fills twenty-eight pages and testifies to his devotion

³⁷ Valentine, John (J.V.), *The N.C. Company Flag*, Northern Commercial Company, March 1959.

³⁸ Shapsnikoff, Anfesia, *Diary*, June 3, 1963.

³⁹ Michael Swetzof, conversation with Ray Hudson, September 11, 2012.

and acumen. When I visited him at Annesia Shapsnioff's suggestion near the end of his life, I asked if he would write something for me in Aleut. He took a scrap of paper and a pencil, smiled at me, and wrote two words: Unangam tunuu.

Eustina Makarin died in November 1968. Andrew survived only seven months longer, dying June 25, 1969. He was buried beside the Church of the Holy Ascension.



Andrew Makarin's skiff on the Ugadaga beach, circa 1970. Photograph by Ray Hudson.



Andrew Makarin. Photograph by Richard S. Heyza, for *The Seattle Times*, December 1966. Courtesy Ray Hudson.



Wire fence and gate remains, Makushin Village, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Lauren Adams.

Chapter 19

The Legacy



Although diverging in significant ways during their final decades, each of the three villages was a culturally unified community, however stressed at times, however different in the 1930s from what they had been in the 19th century. Each had an evolving but continuous ethnography; that is, change occurred within the context of village history and was to a degree controlled by the people themselves. The swift changes precipitated by the World War II evacuation disrupted this pattern of gradual and adaptive introductions and hurled the villages toward oblivion.

By the time war enveloped Biorka and Kashega, these two villages were exhibiting differences that were at least as significant as their similarities. Although both relied on wages earned each summer in the Pribilof Islands seal harvest, their local economies differed significantly. Biorka remained essentially isolated while Kashega (like Makushin) had attracted outsiders whose presence accelerated change. For example, however much *Unangam tunuu* was used in Kashega homes, English was becoming an advantage for employment at the sheep ranches and in commercial fishing. Biorka residents had little reason to acquire English. Although Kashega had older residents, Biorka's ties with the past had a practicality—an economic component—that was stronger than any at Kashega. What would have become of these villages without the interruption of the war? While that question cannot be answered, the question whether or not the evacuation prevented either Kashega or Biorka—or a resettled Makushin, for that matter—from developing into a sustainable community during the crab boom of the 1960s and the emergence of village corporations in the 1970s can be answered in the negative by an examination of the resources available in those locations. They lacked sufficient water and land for development; their harbors were neither deep enough nor large enough for the number and type of ships that would be involved. Would the population have survived the flood of

outsiders? It seems unlikely. Would these villages have found economic solutions to ward off emigration apart from commercial fish processing? Who can say?

By 1960 the lost villages were lost forever. Survivors from the three villages had been incorporated into other communities, principally Akutan and Unalaska. The extent of assimilation varied from person to person. For almost a century, Unalaska had been anything except receptive to promulgating Unangaˆ identity. In a series of lectures in 1988, Alfred Stepetin described conditions at Unalaska in the 1930s. By 1933, he said, “already the Aleut traditions were forgotten. Very few people knew how to sing, dance, or even basket weave.”¹ This explains why Anfesia Shapsnikoff, when she contemplated forming a club to promote Unangaˆ culture in 1967, named Andrew Makarin from Biorka and Sophie Pletnikoff from Kashega among those who would be key contributors. She also included people from Nikolski—such as Sergie Sovoroff—and from Akutan—such as Bill Tcheripanoff—but no one from Unalaska.² This club never became a reality, but Tcheripanoff, Shapsnikoff, and others—notably Sophie Pletnikoff, Nick Galaktionoff, and Sergie Sovoroff—taught traditional skills in nontraditional ways whenever opportunities arose. They participated in school classes paid with federal Indian education and other grant funds; they gave demonstrations at Native craft festivals; and each taught private lessons when requested.

With the formation of corporations under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act in the early 1970s, it was clear that Unangaˆ communities would change once again. For the eastern Aleutians, Unalaska in particular, this federal legislation arrived not a moment too soon. Commercial success had always brought domination by outsiders. The first king crab boom had arrived in the early 1960s; and as that decade progressed, the relatively small Unangaˆ community—including former residents of the three villages and their descendents—began to be overtaken by outside economic forces massed behind commercial fisheries just as it had been overwhelmed by the military a generation earlier. By 1970 the General Services Administration had already sold a few key parcels of land on Amaknak Island to private developers and further sales were only halted when three elderly Unangaˆ filed suit. Local Unangaˆ organizers were assisted by a growing regional body as they made difficult, complex, and at times fractious decisions.

With the formation of the Akutan and Ounalashka Corporations, identity acquired a corporate component that some viewed with disdain as being non-traditional, non-Native. But Unangaˆ identity had always had an economic component. “For a long time already the Aleuts...accept and are ready to accept every innovation which tends to their advantage,” wrote Veniaminov in the 1830s, “not because they did not dare to go against the innovators, but

1 Alfred Stepetin, January 19, 1988. H90-06-180, Elders in Residence Program Collection, Oral History Collection of the Alaska and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska, Fairbanks.

2 Anfesia Shapsnikoff to Ray Hudson, Sept. 13, 1967.



because they were convinced of the real benefit of the innovations.”³ Within the corporations, seemingly “non-corporate” attitudes occasionally influenced decisions. The Ounalashka Corporation’s refusal to act hastily, as outside developers frequently urged, contributed to its gradual emergence as a key player in the future of the region. At Akutan, leaders took pains to insure the relevance of their traditional chief, Luke Shelikoff. “They told me that I am still chief of the village,” he said, “that I am still taking care of the people.”⁴

At the same time that nascent regional and local corporations pursued a secure and profitable base for their operations, a parallel movement developed to address social and cultural issues. This was focused in local non-profit corporations and in the regional Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, also a development of ANCSA. Broad social issues took precedence over cultural matters. Government and private funding was available for critical areas such as housing, health, and education. Less easily funded—and consequently less emphasized—were needs related to language and a range of cultural

Playing a game at the A.C. Company House, Unalaska.

1. Polly Lekanoff
 2. Jenny Galaktionoff
 3. William “Coco” Yatchmenoff (Kashega and Biorka)
 4. Alex Ermeloff (Biorka)
 5. Dora Kudrin (Kashega)
 6. Anfesia Shapsnikoff
 7. Molly Lukaninf (Makushin and Biorka)
 8. Larry Mensoff (Akutan)
 9. Sophie Pletnikoff (Chernofski and Kashega)
 10. Agrifina Makarin
- Photograph by Theodore P. Bank II, circa 1953.

3 Veniaminov, *Notes*, 320-321.

4 Luke Shelikoff in Smith and Petrivelli, *Making It Right*, 173.

components that traditionally distinguished Unangaġ from other Alaska Native groups. These had been preserved most strongly by residents of the lost villages.

Before the first decade of corporations under ANCSA had passed, the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association focused part of its attention and money on the evacuation and relocation of Unangaġ villages during World War II. Initiated by Patrick Pletnikoff, championed by Philemon Tutiakoff, and aggressively pursued by Greg Brelsford and Dimitri Philemonof, the reparations effort took more than a decade and was coupled with Japanese-American efforts to address the internment of civilians. It involved extensive research, interviews, and Congressional testimony, and culminated in passage and signing of the reparations bill (Public Law 100-383) on August 10, 1988.

The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians held a hearing at Unalaska in September 1981. At its conclusion, Judge William M. Marutani, the only Japanese American to sit on the commission, went off the record and spoke directly to students I had brought to the last session. "I don't get out to Unalaska very often," he said, with a slight smile. "I'm afraid this will be my first and last time and this will be my only opportunity." In the course of listening to Unangaġ testify, he had found many similarities between the Aleut experience and that of Japanese Americans. "The experience has been strikingly similar," he said. "The suffering has been similar."

He recalled a young Unangaġ who had expressed feeling shame at being an Aleut at one point of her life. "And the Nisei, too, felt shame," Marutani said, using the term for second generation Japanese Americans. But when you find out, he said, especially when young people "find out—and you owe it to yourself because it is part of your heritage—about what your parents and your grandparents went through—I think you will be mighty, mighty proud of them. You will be mighty, mighty proud to be an Aleut. And you should be." The story of the evacuation, he insisted, should be widely available. "It should be made available to all, but particularly to you because it has very special meaning to you and it will strengthen you as you grow."⁵

Did the evacuation contribute to extinguishing Unangaġ identity in the way the report from The Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians declared? "The Aleuts had their culture snatched from them," the report concluded. "The loss of a generation of village elders has had a cultural impact far beyond the grief and pain to their own families....Evacuation meant irreversible cultural erosion...."⁶ Certainly, a significant number of important voices had been silenced: Nikefer Denisoff, Efemia Kudrin, and Larissa Yatchmenoff from the three villages and many more from other Aleutian and Pribilof communities. And yet, the economic depression that struck the

5 Transcribed by Ray Hudson and used with permission of William M. Marutani, September 17, 1981.

6 *Personal Justice Denied*, 358-359.

Chain after the war heightened the possibility of cultural revival. It necessitated increased subsistence activities. Those older Unangaꝥ who had survived the evacuation and were healthy enough were once again able to practice traditional skills. More significantly, the absence of a strong economy meant a diminished non-Native presence. Even so, a number of factors worked against a return to traditional ways for passing on traditional knowledge. It can be argued that a sufficient number of elders had survived the evacuation to ensure cultural succession, but that it was the evacuation's impact on younger generations that doomed cultural continuity and led to "irreversible cultural erosion." There were teachers, but no one to teach—or at least there were few individuals willing to invest the time and effort into learning. The Nick Galaktionoffs of the late 1940s and early 1950s were rare.

Several factors contributed to this. Economic conditions that encouraged a return to traditional ways also prompted younger individuals and families to leave the islands. They were lured away by opportunities they hoped to find in larger communities. The educational system required students wishing education beyond the eighth grade to attend boarding schools at Sitka or near Salem, Oregon, for nine months of the year, thus depriving communities of the very demographic that had been traditionally taught by elders. For children descended from the three villages, life at Unalaska meant English became the language of primary experience and this created barriers for communication with elders. Another impediment lay in the very complexity and depth of Unangaꝥ culture where specialization was required. To ensure continuation at a high level of expertise, a large body of learners was needed to find a sufficient number of individuals with both interest in specific areas and the time needed for mastery. Another factor was that relocated elders had to acquaint themselves with new surroundings before they were able to be effective teachers. Place was integral to knowledge and the place had changed. For example, Sophie Pletnikoff rarely harvested basket grass at Unalaska because she didn't know where the prime grass grew and she had no wish to infringe on any Unalaska weaver's home turf. And, finally, relocated families were forced to spend disproportionate time just making ends meet. Stress increased; social problems multiplied. From whatever causes—and they were many and complex—in the years *following* the return from southeast Alaska, a host of elders from the three villages took extensive traditional knowledge to the grave.

Today the descendants from the three villages—like descendants of people from Attu, Atka and Unalaska, from St. George, St. Paul, Nikolski and Akutan—remember their relatives who had lived in the villages and who had survived the evacuation or died during it. All share a common legacy. Today Unangaꝥ recognize the evacuation as among the most significant episodes in their history. Its remembrance has heightened a sense of urgency to preserve Unangaꝥ culture and to master whatever new skills ensure effective action in economic, political, and artistic arenas. People understand that pride in being Unangaꝥ must be rooted in enduring specifics if it is to be anything other than hot air or posturing.

As local and regional organizations increasingly emphasized traditional knowledge and cultural practices, they found resources in the former residents of the lost villages.



Gathering at the A.C. Company House, Unalaska.

1. Eustina (Esther) Makarin (Biorka)
2. Andrew Makarin (Biorka)
3. John Gordieff (Chernofski)
4. Larry Mensoff (Akutan)
5. Polly Philemonoff Mensoff (St. George)
6. William Yatchmenoff (Kashega and Biorka)
7. Anfesia Shapsnikoff
8. Sophia Pletnikoff (Chernofski and Kashega)
9. Jenny Galaktionoff
10. Agrafina Makarin

11. Polly Lekanoff (Kashega)
12. Simeon Pletnikoff
13. Alex Ermeloff (Biorka)
14. Molly Lukanin (Makushin and Biorka)

Photograph by Theodore P. Bank II. circa 1953. Bank gave the image to the Unalaska City School and it was published in *Cuttlefish Two: Four Villages*.

Memory is as important to effective cultural innovation as it is integral to cultural continuity. An account of visits made to the three village sites by former residents and descendants is told in the epilogue. At each place, individuals collected mementos: a stone, a piece of wood, a handful of soil, an edible berry. These visits were a reminder of how the stories and skills passed down by elders from the villages has helped shape contemporary Unanga identity. The history of the lost villages has become more than one of loss and disappearance. It is above all a story of courage, endurance, and transformation.

Wildflowers, Biorka
Village, September 2,
2010. Photograph by
Greg Jones.





Summer Fog.

Epilogue

Remembering and Revisiting the Lost Villages

By Rachel Mason



The Beginning of the Project

The Lost Villages of the Aleutians project tells the story of four Alaskan Unanga̋ villages left behind in the evacuations and relocations of World War II, and never permanently resettled. It started in 2003, when historian Linda Cook was working to establish the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area, part of the Affiliated Areas of the National Park Service, Alaska Region. She heard of funding opportunities for oral history projects about the Japanese internment camps of World War II, and thought of documenting the evacuation and relocation of Unanga̋ to Southeast Alaska in the same era. As a result, the NPS investigated the Unanga̋ evacuation sites to determine their eligibility for National Register of Historic Places designation. The initial proposal focused on the “Lost Villages,” communities the U.S. government decided were too small and remote to repopulate after the war, and whose residents were resettled in other villages upon return to the Aleutians.

Linda asked historian and teacher Ray Hudson to conduct oral history interviews with people from the Lost Villages who had been evacuated to Southeast Alaska, and in early 2004, he began work on the project. Ray interviewed five Unanga̋ elders living in Unalaska: Nicholai S. Lekanoff, Nicholai Galaktionoff, Eva Tcheripanoff, Irene Makarin, and Moses Gordieff. The elders were former residents of Makushin, Kashoga, and Biorka, three small villages in the Unalaska Island area, and in the interviews they talked about their lives in those villages and their experiences during World War II, when Unanga̋ in the Aleutian Islands were taken by boat to relocation camps in Southeast Alaska, ostensibly for their own protection. Ten years later, of the original group of elders, only Nick Lekanoff, Sr. and Eva Tcheripanoff are still living.

The interviews resulted in the 2004 volume *The Beginning of Memory*, which included oral histories recorded with each of the five elders, in addition to a past interview with Sophie Pletnikoff, Eva Tcheripanoff's mother. Ray also wrote a detailed introduction to the oral histories, drawing upon many archival government and church records as well as past interviews with Unalaska residents that were conducted by Ray Hudson and his students for the Unalaska City School District's Cuttlefish volumes.

The Lost Villages project has stimulated enormous interest, both to Unangaġ and others. Every time I have made a presentation about the project, whether in Unalaska, Anchorage, Southeast Alaska, or even Seattle, someone has come forward to identify a photo, correct a mistake, or tell about a relative's experiences. Recording the history of four tiny, remote villages, each originally with fewer than 50 people, and with only a handful of surviving residents today, has generated a large network of people whose lives were connected to those places.

The project evolved over a decade. After *The Beginning of Memory* was completed, NPS historian Annaliese Jacobs Bateman was assigned to prepare a publication on the Lost Villages of the Aleutians, using the interviews for the Eastern Aleutians and secondary sources about Attu, the fourth village included in the project. Anna had an ambitious plan to link the Lost Villages to the colonial history of Russian America, and she assembled an enormous amount of information from church records, U.S. Coast Guard reports, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service documents, and a wide array of other sources. When Anna left Alaska and the NPS to attend graduate school, she took the project with her, intending to complete it from afar. Eventually, as her educational pursuits intervened and research interests shifted, she transferred the project to me. With the huge advantage of being able to use all the information Ray and Anna had already collected, I set out to complete the Lost Villages project. My initial plan was to make modest changes to *The Beginning of Memory*, perhaps adding more background material from Anna's research, photographs, or more oral history interviews to the work Ray had already done. Instead, as an expanding group of Unangaġ connected to the Lost Villages shared ideas and enthusiasm, the project took on a life of its own. It became much more public and participatory as it became centered upon boat trips to revisit the Lost Villages with former residents and their descendants.

In 2006, I discussed the project with Okalina Patricia (Patty) Lekanoff-Gregory, daughter of Lost Villages elder Nick Lekanoff, Sr. Remembering trips her father had made to Kashega and Makushin, and how meaningful they had been to the entire family, Patty convinced me that the Lost Villages project would be considerably enhanced by former residents' visits to the village. Nick had most recently visited Makushin in 2005 with archaeologist Chris Wooley to document damage from the *Selandang Ayu* shipwreck and oil spill. Emphasizing the centrality of the church in each village, Patty said the elders would want to plant a large cross at the sites where the churches had stood in the villages.

Spreading the Word

Posting a notice for the project on the Aleut-L list service led to wider contacts with descendants of the Lost Villages. One of them was Josephine Borenin-Shangin, granddaughter of Nick Borenin from Makushin. She helped me meet her great-aunt Mattie Abloogalook, who as Matrona Borenin at age three was the youngest evacuee from Makushin. Although she came back to the Aleutians after the war to be resettled in Akutan, she was soon taken back to Southeast Alaska to a tuberculosis hospital in Sitka. She stayed in Sitka to attend high school at Mount Edgecombe, where she met her husband, an Iñupiaq from Nome.



Josephine (Josy) had grown up in Akutan and remembered her grandfather Nick, who was resettled in Akutan after the war and married Marie Mensoff from that village. Later, in Unalaska, I learned from Nick Galaktionoff that once Makushin had three boys named Nick: Nick Borenin, Nick Galaktionoff, and Nick Lekanoff. Nick Borenin died in 2000.

Josephine Borenin-Shangin (left) and her great-aunt, Mattie Abloogalook, May 2009. Photograph by Rachel Mason.

Also through Aleut-L, I corresponded by e-mail with Mary Diakanoff, originally from Kashega, now living in Juneau. AB Rankin and her daughter Denise Rankin led me to contact their relative George Gordaoff, formerly a Kashega resident but now living in Anchorage, after they saw him at the 2008 annual meeting of The Aleut Corporation.

Over several visits to his home, George told of his experiences as a young boy in Kashega before World War II and in Southeast Alaska during the war. Both his parents died while he was young and he had to find his own way in life. He stayed with different relatives in Kashega, as a young teenager in the early 1940s, and found employment at the Chernofski sheep ranch just before the war. After the Kashega residents were evacuated and brought by ship to Wrangell, he briefly worked as a cook for the large group of relocated Unanga. Instead of going with the other Kashega residents to Ward Lake near Ketchikan, George was able to find work in Juneau. As we planned a trip to revisit Kashega, George was determined to go, even though he was having trouble with his knees. He would have been very happy to revisit Chernofski as well.

Jane Mensoff, originally from Akutan and descended from Kashega and Biorka, responded to my posting on Aleut-L. Jane lives in Seattle and has been active in the Pacific Northwest Aleut Council, a group that brings together Unanga living in Washington and Oregon. She immediately expressed interest in going

to the villages and was frequently in touch. She and her partner Gregory Jones even volunteered to pay for their own travel from Seattle to Unalaska in order to participate in the boat trip.

As the circle of those connected to the Lost Villages widened, I also met Unanga from other villages whose lives were intertwined with Makushin, Biorka, or Kashega. Millie McKeown, Cultural Heritage Director at the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, suggested I talk to Bill Ermeloff, then living in an assisted living home in Anchorage. Bill, who passed away in 2011, lived in Nikolski most of his life. His parents died when he was young and his adoptive father was Afenogan Ermeloff from Nikolski. Annie Olsen, Pete Olsen's adopted daughter who died in Makushin before the war, was Bill Ermeloff's biological sister. With the other residents of the smallest Unanga communities (which included Nikolski and Akutan as well as Makushin, Kashega, and Biorka), Bill had been evacuated to Southeast Alaska and spent the wartime years at Ward Lake, near Ketchikan. While there, he had been able to find work at Metlakatla, clearing trees away from the airstrip for the military.

Genealogist Marti Murray, a longtime Unalaska resident now living in Kodiak, contributed an extremely useful component of the project by compiling "mini-biographies" of each of the Lost Villages. Marti combed through census data, marriage and death records, newspaper articles, and other sources to find genealogical information about each of the residents present in Biorka, Kashega, Makushin and Attu in 1942. Later, she created genealogical mini-biographies for Akutan, Nikolski, and Unalaska. Marti's work made me appreciate the complex kinship and marriage connections among the Eastern Aleutian villages. It also showed how common it was in the early 20th century for an Unanga to have stepparents, adoptive parents, half-siblings, and/or several marriages. Family disruptions through death, illness, or divorce led to moves between villages.

Beginning the Village Journeys

The next task for the Lost Villages project was to find a way to bring people to the villages. My assistant Shannon Apgar-Kurtz and I called numerous airlines and air taxis, and could not find a satisfactory way to charter a plane that would take more than three or four people. We also looked into chartering a boat and ran into the same problem. We were finally able to charter the *Tigla*, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's research vessel operating for the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The *Tigla* had enough bunks for 12 people; already, there was so much interest in the trip that we knew there would be a lot of competition for those spots. Shannon and I organized an informal Boat Trip Steering Committee in Anchorage. One of the committee's major functions was to arbitrate who was "on the list" to go on the village trip. We gave priority to elderly former residents of the villages, and their descendants, but we also wanted to ensure that we had someone to videotape and photograph the experience.



Tiglaḵ at Unalaska,
September 2010.
Photograph by Greg
Jones.

Patty Gregory had told me that we needed to go early in the summer, before the grass got too high. I saw pictures of Biorka in July, with very tall grass there. Unfortunately, the only time we were able to charter the *Tiglaḵ* was at the very end of summer, on August 31. That meant the grass would be at least shoulder-high in Makushin. It wasn't a problem in Kashega, however, because that village site was frequented by feral cows that ate the grass and trampled the remains of buildings. The situation had not changed since archaeologist Chris Wooley documented the cows' damage to the site in summer of 2005.

Cow damage in
Kashega, July, 2005.
Photograph by Chris
Wooley.

Because of concerns about the health and safety of the elderly or frail passengers, we brought along a medical provider. Irene McGlashan, a community health practitioner at Unalaska's Oonalaska Wellness Center, agreed to come on the trip in this role. I also worried that it might be difficult or unsafe for the elderly participants to walk around the villages. Patty suggested we bring chairs to sit in near the church. The elders could drink tea and talk about memories of the village while the younger people dug the hole to plant the cross at the site of the church.



The crosses were Patty's idea. The Ounalashka Corporation, where Patty's husband Dave Gregory was the head of the maintenance department, constructed and donated two five-foot wooden Russian Orthodox crosses to set up where the churches had been at Makushin and Kashega. The priest in Unalaska would bless the crosses before they were loaded on the boat in Unalaska.

We had to obtain consent from the St. George Tanaq Corporation to go to Kashega and from the St. Paul Tanadgusix (TDX) Corporation to go to Makushin. The Pribilof Island communities, first established after 1800 when Russian colonists brought Unanga there to harvest fur seals, have many kinship connections with Eastern Aleutian villages. In the first part of the 20th century, residents of Kashega and Makushin traveled in the summer to the Pribilofs to participate in the seal harvest. The close relationship with these villages influenced the Pribilof Island corporations to choose these now-empty sites as land selections under provisions of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act. The Pribilof Islands and nearby smaller islands did not provide sufficient lands for St. George and St. Paul to select. The need to complete a right-of-entry agreement irritated one of the Makushin descendants, who complained that they should not have to seek permission to visit their own village.

Because many of the descendants of the Lost Villages lived in Unalaska, it made sense to charter the boat to go from Unalaska to each of the villages. Participants from Seattle, Juneau, and Anchorage flew into Unalaska to await the beginning of the trip.

The list of participants from Unalaska was not final until the last minute. AB Rankin, Alice Moller's daughter and Mary Diakanoff's half-sister, was very interested in the trip, but regretfully declined to go on the boat, saying she gets terribly seasick. AB's son Brian Rankin, however, was an enthusiastic volunteer. His email ID was "kashega," a clue to his strong attachment to the village.

Nick Galaktionoff, originally from Makushin, planned to come with us, but on the day before the trip he decided against it. He thought the seas would be rough, and it turned out he was right. In his stead, Nick sent his younger relative Fred Lekanoff, whose grandfather was from Makushin. Eva Tcheripanoff, from Kashega, was happy to see her relatives and friends as they assembled in Unalaska before the trip, but her health prevented her from going.

The oldest passenger in the group that boarded the boat was Nick Lekanoff, Sr. from Makushin, addressed as "Starosta" because of his position as a lay leader in the Russian Orthodox church. Also aboard were Nick's daughter Patty Gregory, Mary Diakanoff and her son Darryl Diakanoff, George Gordaoff, Josy Shangin, Fred Lekanoff, Brian Rankin, Jane Mensoff, our medical provider Irene McGlashan, videographer Lauren Adams and her assistant Laresa Syverson, Debbie Corbett of U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Rachel Mason (myself) of the National Park Service.



Makushin after a Rough Ocean Voyage

On the night before we left, the community held a send-off ceremony for the boat passengers. It was also for the elders who remembered the Lost Villages, but whose health prevented them from going on the boat. Laresa Syverson and some of the youth performed Unanga dances, and I presented a slideshow with old pictures of Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin.

Nick Lekanoff, Sr. at Makushin, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Josy Shangin.

We started out in the early morning. Nick Lekanoff, Sr. had second thoughts at the last minute about going, but finally arrived at the boat with encouragement from his daughter Patty and her husband Dave. Lauren Adams, from Unalaska's television and radio station KUCB, came on the trip to document it on videotape, with assistance from Laresa Syverson. The Tigla has a man-lift to help passengers on board if they have difficulty climbing up and down ladders. One way or another, everyone was eventually on board and we were off before daylight.

From the moment we left, the seas were rough and almost everyone got seasick. George Gordaoff was the only one who seemed to be unaffected, although in the first part of the trip I was proud that I was able to stay up and even eat lunch.

Later, though, I gratefully lay down on my bunk. George, a retired sea captain, spent much of the trip up in the wheelhouse with Captain Billy Pepper. After fighting the wind and seas throughout the morning, Billy proposed that we not try to continue to Kashega, but to return to Unalaska after a visit to Makushin.



Transporting passengers from the *Tiġlaġ* to Makushin beach, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Josy Shangin.

As we came into Makushin Bay, suddenly the sun appeared, the seas calmed, and a rainbow arced across the sky. The boat crew helped the passengers from the *Tiġlaġ* into an Achilles inflatable boat to go to the beach. The cross was also carefully loaded into the Achilles for transport to the village. George, Mary, and Mary's son Darryl decided to stay with the boat instead of going to shore.

The young men and the boat crew brought shovels to the village to dig a hole to plant the cross, and two of them shouldered the cross to carry up to the church site from the beach. Patty had brought a chair for her father to sit on. Lauren and Laresa lugged their camera equipment. We had to push our way through shoulder-high grass.

Rainbow at Makushin, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Lauren Adams.





There wasn't much left of the old houses, but there was a large roof of what looked like a barn. From old pictures of Makushin, I knew that the biggest house had been Pete Olsen's, and I could see its remains at one end of the village. I gathered some dirt and a nail from what I thought was Nick Galaktionoff's old house. Later, he was happy to get the dirt and he slipped the nail into his pocket.

Carrying the cross at Makushin, August 31, 2009. Photograph by Lauren Adams.

Nick Lekanoff showed the others where to place the cross. Brian Rankin, Fred Lekanoff, and Billy Pepper shared the digging. Once the cross had been planted and participants sang "Memory Eternal," we all sat on the ground and Nick talked to us about the old church and the houses in the village. There was one grave still visible near the site of the old church, and he thought it belonged to Annie Olsen, Pete Olsen's adopted daughter, who had died in 1936.

When we got back to Unalaska a crowd of family members and well-wishers was waiting to greet us. Brian Rankin's seven-year-old daughter Sasha came aboard and got a ride in the man-lift. The cross intended for Kashega was also taken off the boat in the man-lift and put in storage to wait for the boat ride the next year. Brian and the other descendants of Kashega were disappointed that we had to forego the trip there this time, but no one would have been eager to continue under the sea conditions we had experienced that morning. All understood that in the Aleutians the sea and the weather are powerful factors. The trip to Kashega was postponed until the next year.



Brian Rankin and his daughter Sasha in the *Tiġlaġ*'s manlift, August 31, 2009 Photograph courtesy AB Rankin.

Launching the Boat Trips in 2010

The *Tiġlaġ* charter for 2010, the second year of Lost Villages trips, was accomplished thanks to a Challenge Grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, facilitated by Debbie Corbett. Roberta Gordaoff, an anthropology student at University of Alaska Anchorage, offered to come with her grandfather George on the second trip. The two of them showed up in Unalaska with George in a wheelchair.

Carlene Arnold, a student from Lawrence, Kansas, contacted Debbie Corbett, who had been collaborating with Carlene's professor Dixie West on an archaeological research project and a book about the Aleutian Islands. Carlene, who grew up in Sitka, Alaska but now lives in Kansas, had only recently learned that her mother was born in Kashaga. She was writing an M.A. thesis for the University of Kansas's Global Indigenous Nations Studies program about her mother's experience of evacuation during World War II, about her grandparents' hospitalization and death after the war, and about her discovery of these events. Debbie Corbett arranged for Carlene to come to Unalaska as we all assembled for the second trip.

Here are some excerpts from Carlene's thesis, *The Legacy of Unjust and Illegal Treatment of Unangan During World War II and Its Place in Unangan History* (2011):

When I was growing up, my parents rarely discussed the family or the history of the cultures from which they came. Regrettably, I did not realize that my parents were of different tribes. Dad was Tlingit, born and raised in Sitka. Mom was Unangan, born in Unalaska before she moved to Wrangell. (4)

Because my mom had not disclosed her family background to us, I decided to look into Unangan culture. I began by researching the Aleut Corporation and other Unangan corporations. I discovered that there was a history I did not know, that during World War II there were some Unangan who had been taken as prisoners by the Japanese while others who were on other islands had been evacuated to Southeast Alaska by the United States military. (5)

I found my mom's and her family's name on the list of evacuees from Kashaga. Needless to say, I was surprised, not only because they were on the list, but I also discovered that my mom had a brother I did not know about. ... I needed to know for myself, but also for my siblings, kids, grandkids and for those thereafter, what this story was all about. (6)

Trip to Kashaga

At the end of August 2010, participants again assembled in Unalaska. We visited friends in Unalaska and waited for the boat to arrive. As had occurred the year before, there was a send-off ceremony at the Senior Center in Unalaska the day before we left. Laresa Syverson and some of the Unalaska youth performed Unangan dances. Elders who were unable to go on the boat trip and other community members assembled to wish the passengers well. Carlene was meeting relatives for the first time:

At the Send Off Ceremony, I was excited, but nervous at the same time because I knew that I was going to meet new family members whom I

did not know before. After the ceremony, Mary caught my attention and told me that she knew my parents and grandparents from Kashega, and how they kept their house very clean and that it was the biggest house there in the village. Later, I discovered that Mary and I were cousins. I also was introduced to Eva Tcheripanoff, also a cousin, and she had known my grandparents. Eva lives in Unalaska; she was from Kashega at the time of the evacuation. (78)



Laresa Syverson leads dancers at send-off, Unalaska, September 1, 2010. Photograph by Roberta Gordaoff.



Audience at send-off, Unalaska, September 1, 2010. Nick Galaktionoff Sr. (left front); Irene McGlashan, (right front). Photograph by Roberta Gordaoff.

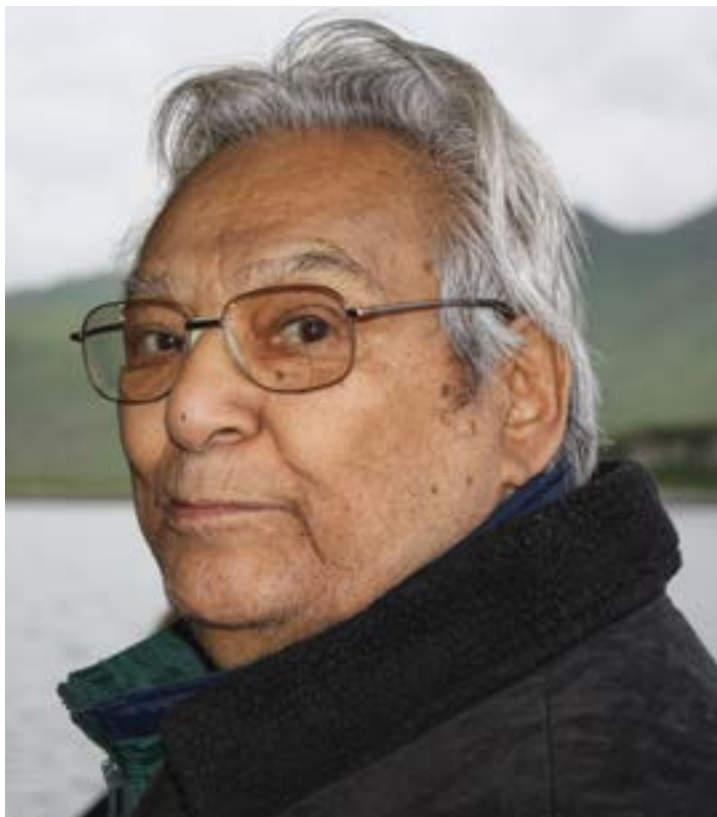
Again, the Unalashka Corporation had donated two crosses to plant at the church sites, this time in the villages of Kashega and Biorka. These were two new crosses, because over the past year, the corporation had used the one set aside for Kashega for a grave marker. This year, when participants asked the Russian Orthodox priest in Unalaska, Father Kashevaroff, to bless the crosses, he expressed his concern that if the crosses were to be placed on church property, it was necessary for a priest, and preferably the priest's wife as well, to be present. He did not insist on that condition, however, and he blessed both crosses. They were brought on board the day of the trip, using the manlift.

Passengers on board for the trip to Kashega included George Gordaoff and his granddaughter Roberta Gordaoff; Mary Diakanoff and her daughter Evonne Mason; Jane Mensoff; Ruth Kudrin and her daughter Anesia Kudrin; Eva Kudrin; Brian Rankin; Fred Lekanoff; medical provider Irene McGlashan; videographer Lauren Adams; Debbie Corbett of USFWS; and myself of NPS. We were happy to see Billy Pepper, the captain of the *Tiġlaġ*, and some of the same crew members we remembered from the year before.

The *Tiġlaġ* left port on the evening of September 1, to give the passengers a chance to sleep as we traveled. The seas were much calmer than the year before, and the passengers crawled into their bunks and slept peacefully until the vessel anchored up off Kashega. In the morning, crew members ferried the passengers ashore in an Achilles, along with a cross for the church site. Very little remained of the houses and other buildings in the village. Wild cows, holdovers from the ranching days, had trampled the foundations and kept the grass short.

On September 3, George Gordaoff stood in Kashega again for the first time in almost 70 years. George was 17 in 1942 when a boat arrived to evacuate the villagers. After joining the Army during World War II and after a long career mainly on boats in Alaska waters, George is now retired and living in Anchorage. George's knees were worse this year and he needed a wheelchair to get around in Unalaska before getting on the boat. At the site of Kashega's former church, though, he looked pretty spry.

George Gordaoff
aboard the *Tiġlaġ*,
September 2, 2010.
Photograph by
Lauren Adams.



Mary Diakanoff, who came from Juneau with her daughter Evonne Mason for this trip, was born in Kashega. Mary's father was from Norway, and her mother was from Kashega. The family moved to Unalaska when Mary was four, but they came to the village often to put up salmon and visit relatives. The last time Mary visited Kashega was after Dutch Harbor was bombed in 1942, when she was 11. Since then, Mary has always remembered Kashega as one of her favorite places.

Several members of the intertwined Kudrin and Mensoff families were among those who visited Kashega: Jane Mensoff, her cousins Eva and Ruth Kudrin, and Ruth's 13-year-old daughter Anesia, known to all as Pepsi. Ruth and Eva's father, George Kudrin, was 17 and living in Kashega when the evacuations took place. Like the other George, he worked on a ranch near Kashega in his youth. After the trip, Eva wrote, "I was very excited to walk and see where my Dad was born and raised...He talked about riding the horses and working the sheep. No wonder he loved mutton so much." Jane's mother Olga Kudrin, age 24 in 1942, was George's sister. While in Southeast Alaska during World War II, Olga married John Mensoff, Sr. from Akutan. George eventually married John's sister Anesia Mensoff. The Mensoffs also have roots in Biorka, another Lost Village. As Jane put it, "I walked Kashega and Biorka hoping that my mother and father could 'take one more walk' with me."

Carlene related her impressions of the boat trip to Kashega:

We continued to get to know one another while aboard the boat. Mary was joined by her daughter Evonne Mason, both of Juneau. George Gordaoff was accompanied by his granddaughter Roberta Gordaoff, both of Anchorage. Both Mary and George were originally from Kashega. While Mary and George were telling stories, Mary had brought with her a diagram of Kashega that had been drawn by Polly Lekanoff [Nick Lekanoff's wife and Patty Gregory's mother]. Both Mary and George discussed who had lived where in the houses shown on this map. However, this was difficult because it had been seventy years since they had been there. Mary was kind enough to give me a picture of Kashega before the evacuation. Mary and George's descriptions and stories gave everyone an idea of what the village had looked like at the time of the evacuation. Rachel also gave me a copy of the sketch map of Kashega before the evacuation. (67)

Carlene told of the visit to the village:

We woke up and had breakfast and got ready to go ashore. (68)

We arrived in the bay of Kashega; it was a little windy, and both George and Mary were the first to land on the beach.

The rest of us joined up with them. The Tiġlaġ crew were great, in that they were very patient and worked well with the elders. (79)



George Gordaoff and his granddaughter Roberta arrive at Kashega, September 2, 2010. Photograph by Lauren Adams.



Heading to Kashega, September 2, 2010. Photograph by Carlene Arnold.



Left to right: Anesia Kudrin, Ruth Kudrin, Jane Mensoff and Irene McGlashan at Kashega ruins, September 2, 2010. Photograph by Carlene Arnold.

When everyone else had arrived, they began to explore the area of the former village. There were very little traces that remained. We found a few boards or posts from the original church that people picked up to take back with them. Everyone was gathering little souvenirs such as berries, pans, and soil to take back with them. They were also taking pictures of each other and the area of the former village. I could hear people talking about how beautiful Kashega was—and still is—nestled in a nice location for fishing with a good beach for gathering seafood and berries when they were ripe for the picking. (68)

Afterwards, everyone gathered at the former site of the church. A Russian cross was brought out and, with George's direction, the cross was placed there followed by a small service where the group blessed the cross with holy water and sang a song. Having the opportunity to go back to Kashega meant a lot to Mary and George. One could see it in their faces and the emotions were more than words can express. By the end of the ceremony it was early evening and time to head back to the Tiglaĵ for the return to Unalaska. (68-69)

After everyone explored the former village site, we gathered and placed a Russian cross at the former site of the church and had a small ceremony, blessed the cross, said a prayer, and sang a song. Also, when the cross

was being placed, everyone placed a shovelful of dirt at the cross, as is a tradition with the Russian Orthodox Church. While the ceremony was taking place, I felt a sense of peacefulness, and I could sense the ancestors who were there during the ceremony. It was an experience that I have never felt before, and I will always remember that day of the ceremony at Kashega and keep it dear to my heart. (81)



George Gordaoff at Kashega, September 2, 2010. Photograph by Jane Mensoff.

I had never thought that I would be able to see where my mom was from, much less to have walked on the land that she knew, before being taken to the Southeast. While I was exploring, I picked some salmonberries, gathered some soil from the area of the church, and took it back with me to Unalaska so I could take it to my grandparents' graves and give them something from Kashega. (80-81)

Carlene also talked about the boat ride back to Unalaska:

While on the boat, Mary and George told stories of their childhood at Kashega, from the time when Mary was only ten or eleven and George was a little older. (79)

They enjoyed listening to George's stories of his childhood in Kashega. I was excited to see where my mom and her parents were born and being able to walk where they lived. It had a certain beauty to it. I have grown up with trees around us all the time, but seeing the landscape of Kashega was beautiful and peaceful. I could see how the people loved this place and were disappointed that they could not return to it after the war. As we explored the site, we mostly found boards from the houses. At the site of the church, there were posts. I stayed with Mary,

who was trying to remember where everything was. She pointed out where my grandparents' house was and said that it was the biggest house there, and that everyone kept their homes clean. For her, it was a special place when she was growing up; it was her favorite place to go of all places. She did not like Unalaska; it was big and was like a metropolitan type place for her. (80)



Mary Diakanoff and George Gordaoff aboard the *Tig̃lax̃*, September 2, 2010. Photograph by Lauren Adams.

Trip to Biorka

The second boat trip of September 2010, to Biorka, was a day trip. Kathy Dirks was the senior Biorka descendant who made this year's journey to the village. Kathy's grandfather Andrew Makarin, a church reader in Biorka, led about 20 people to resettle Biorka after the war, despite the lack of support from the government. After several years, it became increasingly difficult to make a living there. The call of home was strong, but the need for economic survival was

stronger. One by one, each family began spending more time in Unalaska each time they traveled there. Finally, after a storm blew down some of the houses, even Andrew Makarin realized he had to leave. He returned with some of his grandchildren, including Kathy Dirks, in 1965 to construct a small house where the altar had stood in the former church.

Many of the others who went to Biorka had gone to Kashega the day before. Again, Irene McGlashan served as medical provider. Brian Rankin and Fred Lekanoff came partly to provide strong labor for planting the cross. Eva Kudrin, Jane Mensoff, Lauren Adams, Carlene Arnold, Rachel Mason and Debbie Corbett were back for another trip. Greg Jones, Jane Mensoff's companion, and Alexandra Gutierrez, a reporter for the Unalaska TV station, joined the group. There was room for two more, so George Gordaoff and his granddaughter Roberta decided they would come back for another trip as well.

The *Tigla* left in the early morning and was anchored off Biorka a couple of hours later. Again, the passengers came ashore by Achilles, this time well bundled up from the rain. With difficulty, the group climbed up the steep bank and broke a path to the site of the church. There were no cows in Biorka to eat the grass, so it was shoulder-high. There were still remains of some houses at the village site. It appeared that foxes had already been living in the house Kathy Dirks identified as Andrew Makarin's home.

Biorka, Beaver Inlet,
September 3, 2010,
Photograph by Carlene
Arnold.



Here is Carlene's account of the trip to Biorka:

After the Kashega trip, we returned to Dutch Harbor; the next morning we departed for Biorka. Most of the same people that went to Kashega also attended the Biorka trip. Jane's father was from Biorka, and Kathy Dirks is a descendant from Biorka. Nick Galaktionoff and his son John were unable to attend because of health conditions; maybe the rough weather also was a part of the reason they did not go. Anna Merculief, a former resident of Biorka, decided not to go because such bad weather was predicted. Although this portion of the trip was for the descendants from Biorka to actually set foot on the site of where their family originated, some people from other villages also participated in the trip. (70-71)

Friday morning, September 2, 2010, we left Dutch Harbor and headed to Biorka, a shorter trip than the one to Kashega. The weather was bad, but not as bad as it had been on the 2009 trip, according to what everyone who had gone was saying. It was mostly the women who had ties to Biorka, so they were especially excited to go. (71)

The seas were rough during the entire trip. When we arrived at Biorka, I was surprised to see the way the grass was there. It was unlike Kashega, which had wild cows that helped keep the grass low. At Biorka, the grass was so tall that one could not see the ground. Because ground visibility was poor, a couple of people fell into relatively deep holes, but no one was hurt. At times, the wind blew sideways, making it hard to look around. However, I have to say that even with the bad weather it still seemed as if it had been a beautiful place to live. It was mountainous, good for hiking, with a nice beach for beachcombing. Fred Lekanoff and Brian Rankin dug a hole for the cross to be placed at the site of where the church had been. At Biorka, it was easier to locate where the church had been because an altar was still standing. Although it had deteriorated, it was possible to see what it was. Andrew Makarin, Kathy Dirks' grandfather, had built the altar on an earlier visit in 1965. A storm had blown down some of the houses there. Makarin had torn down the walls of these and the surviving roof of the church and built the altar on the church site. (71)

While the men were digging, we went exploring. There was a lake near Biorka and it was very peaceful although the weather was bad. From the boat, I had noticed that there was a partial building still standing. I learned it had been the house of Andrew Makarin. One could see some items in the house, such as a dresser and part of a bed. It was amazing to see these items still in place after all these years. Kathy was excited to see her grandfather's house... Words could not express her feelings of seeing the house still standing there with the possessions of her grandparents still inside. (72)

I have to say though, even with the bad weather there, it was still a beautiful place to live. The weather did not let up while we there at Biorka. It was rather hard to explore the village site, because of the weather and the tall grass, and it was hard to take good pictures there. There was a partial house still standing, after all these years; it was amazing, with the strong winds that the islands get each year. Either Brian Rankin or Fred Lekanoff went inside the house to retrieve something from there and gave it to Kathy Dirks, because it was her grandfather's house. For Kathy, it meant a lot to see her grandfather's house still there, and to see what was still in there and retrieve something from there was a bonus. (82)

Preparing to plant
a cross at Biorka,
September 3, 2010.
Photograph by
Greg Jones,





Kathy Dirks at Biorka with beach-polished stones in a blue tinware plate that may have come from her grandfather's home. "I told myself it was," she later said. Photograph by Lauren Adams September 3, 2010.

In 2010, the small house Andrew Makarin had built still stood at the site of the church. Boat passengers Brian Rankin and Fred Lekanoff, with help from Tiglañ captain Billy Pepper, planted a new Russian Orthodox cross nearby. With Irene McGlashan, our health provider, Kathy Dirks said a prayer. Tears fell down Kathy's face, and the faces of others, as she and Irene sang Memory Eternal beside the now-weatherbeaten little house. I thought of how sad Andrew Makarin must have been to close down the church. The brief ceremony was a fitting memorial for the village and for its residents who are no longer with us.

After looking at the house, everyone gathered at the cross to begin the ceremony. In Russian Orthodox tradition, we blessed the cross with Holy water and each of us put dirt in the area where it was located. Both Kathy and Irene McGlashan said a prayer and we sang —Memory Eternal—a song that had been sung at funerals. The cross and the ceremony were a suitable memorial for the village and for the remains of those who had been left behind. By the end of the ceremony, it seemed as if the weather was getting a little bit better. We headed back to the beach and waited for the Zodiac [Achilles] to come and take us back to the ship (73).

When the cross was ready to be put in place, there was another ceremony as mentioned earlier. While they were singing Memory Eternal, I had the same sense that the ancestors were [83] there again. During both ceremonies, it seemed like there was a peaceful or calmness about it. I believe everyone there felt the same way. (82-83)

Nick Galaktionoff, Sr., originally from Makushin, married a girl from Biorka and was one of the people who moved to the resettled village after the war. The couple's first child, a son, was born there but died as an infant. Nick wanted to go back to visit his son's grave, but he didn't want to make the trip at this time of year, when rough seas were likely. At least he knew we had planted a cross near his son's resting place and had remembered him and the others who once lived there.



Carlene with her grandparents' graves, Unalaska, September 4, 2010. Photograph by Rachel Mason.

Back in Unalaska after Kashega and Biorka

Carlene recounted her thoughts about the trip after we returned to Unalaska:

Both trips to Kashega and Biorka were a success. Former residents and descendants got to see the villages, gather mementoes, take pictures and videos of the area, and participate in the ceremony of blessing the cross before it was placed in the former site of the church in each of the villages. Stories and memories will always be in the hearts of everyone who attended the Lost Villages trips to Kashega and Biorka. (76)

Although my mother and I were not close, I feel that she or her parents had a part in my findings or research. I don't know why my mother did not disclose this part of her life to me or my siblings. But I am glad to have the opportunity to discover this part of her life for myself and for the rest of my family. However, there are still some unanswered questions that I will continue to look into. (76)

Carlene also had an opportunity to visit her grandparents' final resting place in Unalaska. Her grandmother Nellie Yatchmenoff was evacuated to Southeast Alaska with her two small children, Laura and Paul, ages 4 and 2. Laura was Carlene's mother. When Laura's parents died in Southeast Alaska before they were able to return to Kashega, Laura was adopted by a non-Native family. Nellie and Peter Yatchmenoff were anonymously buried at the tuberculosis sanitarium in Sitka. Their remains were identified in the 1990s and returned to Unalaska, where they were buried in the cemetery. After our boat trip to Kashega, Carlene visited her grandparents' graves, bringing soil and berries she and others gathered in the village. She sprinkled both on the graves of Nellie and Peter so they would rest with something from their home.

Carlene's research had uncovered surprising information about her grandparents' experience in Southeast Alaska.

While conducting research, I discovered some information that I really did not know about. I found a newspaper article in Sitka telling that the city was expanding its airport, and while they were working they came across an underground bunker that had a collection of caskets with no names on them, only numbers. Apparently, during the years from 1947 to 1966, there was a tuberculosis (TB) epidemic, and these patients were sent to Mt. Edgecombe Hospital in Sitka. I learned that my grandparents were a part of this story. My grandparents were evacuated from Kashega to Southeast Alaska, and while they were there, both contracted TB. They were sent to Mt. Edgecombe, where they eventually passed away, and were buried in the underground bunker. This explains why my mom and uncle were adopted. But I still do not know in which town they were adopted; this is one matter I will follow up on after my graduation. (77)

It had been twenty years since the mausoleum had been opened up. After it was opened, Bob Sam, coordinator of the Native Graves Protection and Repatriation program at Sitka Tribes of Alaska at that time, researched hospital records and had DNA tests performed on the patients. I believe that most of them were identified. They contacted my brother with the findings, and the city had a ceremony for those families that had family placed to rest in the mausoleum. In addition, if they found the family or where they came from, in accordance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), most were repatriated back to where they originated. (77)

My grandparents were repatriated back to Unalaska. I had been in contact with Laresa Syverson from Ounalashka Corporation in Unalaska on various inquiries about the Unangaġ. After informing Syverson about my thesis and family history, she discovered that my grandparents were buried in the Unalaska cemetery. I was very appreciative that Laresa had gone out there to look for me. I understand that there was a ceremony for my grandparents when they were returned to Unalaska. I wish I could have attended the event myself, but what has passed is still heartwarming. (78)

The next day Rachel took me to the cemetery in Unalaska, where my grandparents are buried. There I place the berries and dirt that I collected at Kashega on their graves, and talked with them for a little bit. While I was in Unalaska, Rachel had taken me and a few others to visit with Nick Galaktionoff, also an evacuee from Biorka. While visiting with him and his son John, we discovered that we are cousins. Rachel or I told Nick who my parents were, and Nick told us that his mother was my grandmother's sister from Makushin. My grandmother was Natalia Lekanoff and her sister was Parascovia Lekanoff. Nick was unable to go on the Lost Villages trip to Biorka, due to his health and worries about the weather. John calls me every once in a while to see how I am doing. So, this trip was a discovery of new family for me as well. (84-85)

The timing was perfect; I would have never discovered where my mother and grandparents came from, had it not been for doing research on the Unangan people. Seeing the beauty of Kashega and sensing the ancestors that were there during the placement of the Russian Cross was more than I could have imagined or hoped to experience just reading other peoples' articles or books. Furthermore, while on the trip, I got to meet new friends and family who will always be a part of my life. Also, I discovered more about my mom's family, such as that her grandparents were interned in Sitka and were repatriated back to the Aleutians, and that my mom had a brother that I did not know about. I will continue to search or find out what happened to him. (87)



Peter Yatchmenoff's
grave, Unalaska,
September 4, 2010.
Photograph by
Carlene Arnold.



Nellie Yatchmenoff's
grave, Unalaska,
September 4, 2010.
Photograph by
Carlene Arnold.

The same morning that Carlene put the dirt and berries on her grandparents' graves, Roberta Gordaoff and I took a hike down to Ugadaga Bay, following the trail the people from Biorka used to take. Mary Diakanoff remembered seeing them walk up the trail to sell their baskets and furs, returning with food and supplies they had received in trade or for cash. We drove to the top of the pass over an old military road. The trail down and up seemed long now, and we reflected on how much longer it would have been when there was no road to town and the Biorka residents had to walk five or more miles in addition to their boat ride to Ugadaga Bay.



Rachel Mason at top of the pass to Ugadaga, September 4, 2010. Photograph by Roberta Gordaoff.

2011: Ketchikan and Ward Lake

In May 2011, I had the opportunity to visit Ketchikan and Ward Lake, the Civilian Conservation Corps camp where the Unanga̅ residents of the smallest Aleutian villages, including Makushin, Kashega, and Biorka, were relocated during World War II. Charles Mobley, who had already investigated the Unanga̅ wartime relocation sites in Southeast Alaska to determine their eligibility for a National Historic Register designation, also traveled to Ketchikan to conduct further research on Ward Lake.

We learned that Feckla “Faye” McGlashan Schlais, from Akutan, had stayed in Ward Cove as a teenager during the war and was now living in Ketchikan. We met with Faye for lunch at the at the Rendezvous Senior Center, and she provided us with a photograph of her family, Hugh and Mattie McGlashan and some of their nine children, in front of the bus that Eugene Wacker used to transport Unanga̅ between Ward Lake and Ketchikan. While at Ward Lake, she found a job in downtown Ketchikan. She married Evard Schlais and stayed in Ketchikan after the war.

Chuck Mobley and I went to Ward Lake, where little remains of the CCC camp. There is now a picnic shelter at the site, and a sign has been placed to recognize the Unanga̅ who were relocated there during World War II. Chuck took pictures and recorded information about the little evidence remaining, such as a broken footbridge and a coiled piece of metal. I also visited the Bayview Cemetery and walked over the row of unmarked Unanga̅ graves. They included the graves of Ephemina Kudrin from Kashega, Jane Mensoff’s grandmother, and of the two Eva Borenins from Makushin, one a teenager

and the other a woman in her 50s. I knew about the graves from my colleague Greg Dixon, who had visited the cemetery the year before and met with the caretaker. Greg told me that although the burials are unmarked, the caretaker knows the location of each.



Boardwalk at Ward Lake, May 4, 2011.
Photograph by Charles Mobley.

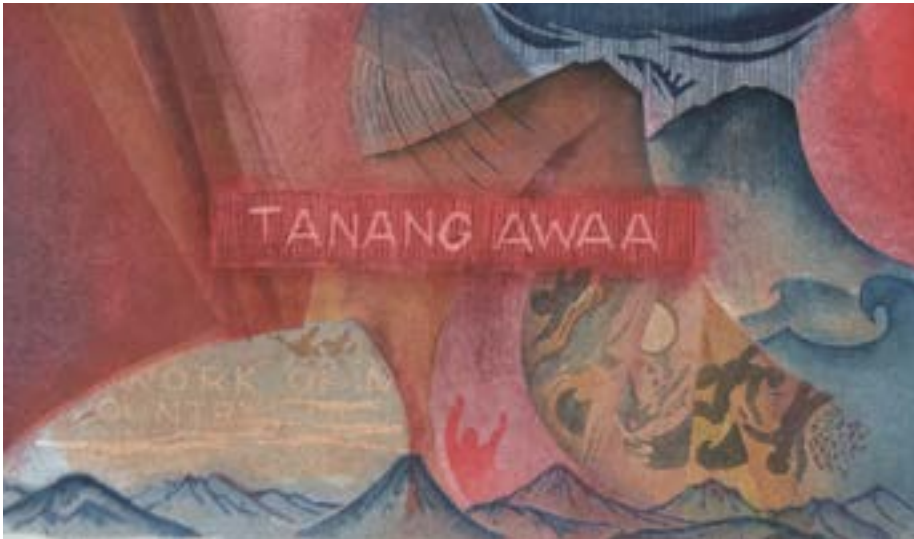
Telling the Painful Story

A common experience for descendants of the Lost Villages is that their parents never or very rarely talked with them about the evacuations of World War II. Former residents of the villages were far more willing to reflect on memories of life in the old villages, than they were to reminisce about the painful times of evacuation. Noticeably, in the transcribed oral history interviews, there is very little description of the actual experience of internment. Perhaps it is a cultural trait of Unangaġ to avoid talking about painful memories. After I spoke at the senior citizens' lunch in Unalaska, one woman asked, "Why did you have to bring up all these sad memories?" Before I approached another woman to ask her about her experiences at Ward Lake, her daughter-in-law warned me that it was very hard for her to talk about, and she might not want to say anything. Other people handled painful memories as they dealt with the painful events: by getting through them and moving on. I asked Bill Ermeloff, from Nikolski, about his short stay with his young family at the Wrangell Institute, which I assumed must have been a difficult time. He said, "It was something new."

The narrative style in the oral histories is related to the traditional Unangaġ art of storytelling. According to Laughlin (1980) Unangaġ had several different types of stories and styles of storytelling. In one style, described by a man from Akutan, the speaker paused frequently, followed by sounds of approval by the

listeners. Although accuracy of memory was important, it was considered in bad form to correct a mistake. In the Lost Villages oral history narratives Ray Hudson recorded and other Unangaꝯ interviews, I have noticed that even when memories differ, speakers do not usually correct other storytellers.

Narratives Jochelson collected in Unalaska in 1909 show another convention of Unangaꝯ storytelling: to characterize each story, as storyteller Isidor Solovyov did, as the “work of my country.” The question-answer format of the Lost Villages interviews makes it less obvious, but there are still hints of this perspective in the way Nick Lekanoff, Nick Galaktionoff, Eva Tcheripanoff, Irene Makarin, and Moses Gordieff talked about their lives. Of Ray’s interviewees, Nick Galaktionoff stands out as a storyteller, but each had a personal style. Even as they recall their own experiences, the narrators still convey the work of their country, the foggy coasts and mountains of Unalaska Island. They were less inclined to comment and report on the unfamiliar country they lived through as a result of wartime relocation.



At the Beginning of a Story.

Unangaꝯ have experienced many displacements in their history, voluntary and involuntary. Before European contact, settlements were occasionally moved, usually for better access to resources, but also because of natural disasters, such as volcanoes. Under Russian colonial rule, men were forced to hunt sea otters, and hunting parties left their families and communities for months at a time. The Russians moved groups of people to work in the Pribilofs, or to consolidate the population into larger villages when smaller ones were decimated by disease and hardship. When Unangaꝯ communities were evacuated and their residents placed in relocation camps during World War II, their residents underwent a new kind of displacement. In a presentation at the Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association Senior Potluck in 2009, I referred to the Lost Villages as “abandoned” and was corrected by Alice Petrivelli, who told me that the departure was not voluntary.

Most of the former residents of the villages that Ray Hudson and others interviewed were children in 1942, when the evacuations occurred. Perhaps because many of them moved after the war to Unalaska, Akutan, Anchorage, Seattle, and elsewhere, they had relatively little chance to develop a collective memory of the old villages or about the wartime evacuation. They remember childhood events such as a doll left behind, or a fight with a cousin or sibling. There were some funny or matter-of-fact stories about presumably traumatic times. A collective view of the evacuation began to emerge after the reparations hearings in the 1980s. There have been disagreements and revisions of the stories of individual or collective migrations. Ironic editorials are added or implied in the retelling. Mary Diakanoff, who had stayed at Burnett Inlet in Southeast Alaska, said her future husband got work “building that nice camp for the Germans.” She was referring to the prisoner of war camp whose inmates were much better cared for than the UnangaꝔ housed in terrible conditions nearby.

Those who remembered the Lost Villages wanted to revisit the landscape and feel the wind, rain, and sea air as they had in the old days. George Gordaoff worried that he wouldn't be able to walk very well around Kashega if he went back, but he wanted to see the coastline he remembered from the boat. For those evacuated to Southeast Alaska during the war, the alien landscape was one of the worst parts of the experience. Several people mentioned how difficult it was to get used to living among the trees in Southeast Alaska. The UnangaꝔ place of comfort was on treeless windswept islands.

Return visits by boat to the ruins of the villages, with the elderly surviving residents and some of their younger descendants, were key to the Lost Villages project. We planted a cross at the site of the church in each village, filming the residents. Almost all the surviving residents of the villages that we have been able to contact have said that they would love to go back now to the old villages. In fact, it was difficult to choose who was most “qualified” to go. Two of the elders who wanted to revisit their villages in 2009 were blind or nearly blind, but still wanted to go back to the places they once lived. One of them, Nick Galaktionoff, often sat by himself on the beach at Unalaska while he fished. He could tell when there was a fish in the net. He could still feel the Aleutian wind and know when a plane was unlikely to fly or when a boat would encounter rough seas. He felt the landscape, even when he didn't see it.

The Lost Villages project speaks to those Unangaꜥ who remember being separated from their home villages, years of living in relocation camps in Southeast Alaska, and not being able to return home. It also speaks to their children and grandchildren, and to the descendants of all those who experienced the loss of their villages but are now gone. It is meaningful, though, to all of us. Many can relate to the strain of abrupt, unwelcome change from a familiar landscape to a foreign one, and the sadness of never being able to return home.

Sometimes people want to return to a painful place. Some Unangaꜥ have made trips back to Southeast Alaska to revisit evacuation camps. One reason they want to do that is to visit the graves at Funter Bay and Ketchikan. As they remembered and revisited their former villages, participants in the Lost Villages project did not want to return only to a place of happy memories. They wanted to honor their parents and relatives, and put them to rest.



Nick Galaktionoff on the beach at Unalaska, July 2, 2002. Photograph by Shelly Hudson.

MEMORY ETERNAL

Index

A

Abloogalook, Mattie 285
Abloogalook, Vincent 259
Agrafina Petikoff. *See* Makarin: Agrifina
Akun 48, 54, 61, 66, 71, 76, 77, 97
Akutan 1–11, 4, 9, 17, 56, 61, 71, 76, 77, 89, 90, 95, 97,
99, 105, 113, 115, 117, 120, 123, 124, 126, 129,
131, 147, 148, 149, 150, 153, 162, 187, 189, 192,
209, 220, 228, 231, 232, 235, 237, 240, 243, 244,
246, 247, 249, 251, 252, 255, 257, 258, 259, 260,
263, 264, 276, 277, 279, 280, 285, 286, 296, 309,
310, 312, 317
Alaska Commercial Company VI, VII, 1, 29, 67, 68,
74, 78, 84, 85, 103, 106, 110, 113, 126, 171, 175,
180, 195, 199, 202, 209, 211, 270, 316, 317
Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge 286
Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act 276, 288. *See*
also ANCSA
alcohol 39, 161, 182, 189, 199, 222, 250
Aleut Corporation 285, 293
Aleutian Islands Reservation 143, 145, 147, 148, 149,
150, 189
Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association VI, 236, 277,
286, 311
Aleutian World War II National Historic Area I, V,
283
Alexei [Bishop] 209
Alice Moller V, VI, 136, 152, 159, 164, 196, 197, 201,
202, 205, 226, 229, 254, 255, 259, 263, 267, 270,
288
ANCSA 277, 278. *See* Alaska Maritime National
Wildlife Refuge
Anderson Bay 146, 173, 174, 209
Antonin, Bishop 195
Applegate, Samuel 5, 79, 110, 116, 120, 127, 128, 142,
143, 145, 151, 316
Arkhimandritov, Illarion 68, 74
assimilation 224, 276
Atka 4, 25, 31, 55, 56, 63, 65, 68, 69, 70, 73, 95, 99,
101, 102, 103, 115, 117, 126, 134, 137, 138, 147,
149, 150, 153, 186, 202, 205, 209, 214, 228, 237,
239, 243, 244, 253, 264, 279, 318
Attu 4, 55, 63, 67, 68, 73, 85, 95, 99, 101, 113, 116,
117, 122, 131, 134, 142, 147, 149, 150, 153, 159,

186, 193, 228, 229, 232, 237, 252, 255, 279, 284,
286, 323

B

baidar 19–26, 42, 58
baidarka 49, 53, 71, 143, 157, 172–183, 173, 228
Bailey, George W. 73
Bank, Theodore P. 276, 280
Baranof, M.A. 249
Baranof, Makary A. 249
Baranov 7, 47, 48, 63
Baranov, Alexander 7
Beaver Inlet 1, 4, 8, 14, 15, 19, 23, 24, 29, 30, 32, 42,
48, 49, 54, 61, 68, 94, 109, 126, 181, 185, 187,
188, 193, 232, 233, 236, 301
Belkovski 99, 101, 149, 209
Benson 117, 118
Benson, [Bjorn] Brown 117
Bereskin
Anna Jean VI, 188, 266, 268
John 235
Peri 231
Bergsland, Knut 3–4, 6, 10–11, 15–17, 21–22, 31–32,
39, 41, 54, 69, 102, 200, 202, 318
Berikoff, Emilian 121, 143, 146
Biorka 1–9, 11, 13–14, 17, 21, 23, 26, 29, 34–35,
47–49, 54–55, 58, 61, 63, 65–66, 68, 71–78, 85,
89–90, 92, 94–95, 97, 99–103, 105–107, 109–
110, 113, 115, 117–118, 120, 120–122, 124–127,
129, 131, 133, 137–139, 141–143, 145, 147–148,
150, 152–155, 160, 185–190, 192–193, 209,
219–221, 228–230, 232–234, 236, 239–241,
243–246, 251, 253, 255, 258, 263–270, 275–276,
280–281, 283, 285–287, 289, 295–296, 300–309
Bishop Alexei. *See also* Panteleev, Alexander
Black, Lydia 6, 10, 39, 318
Bogoslof Island 79, 104, 118
Bolshanin, Nicholas 118, 143, 145, 188
Borenin
Akenfa 219
Carl 221, 239, 245, 251, 253, 260
Elia 133, 153, 176, 179, 207, 209, 210, 213, 215, 219,
238, 258
Eva 219–221, 237, 250
George 1, 136, 139, 157, 168, 205, 219, 221, 232,

239, 245, 253, 256, 260–262, 264–265, 268
Innokentii 220, 222, 229, 230, 259
John [Makushin] 133, 172–173, 175, 210, 212, 269
John S. 105
Marva 172, 210, 212–213, 228
Matfey 133, 210
Matrona 135, 219, 285
Mike 190, 214
Natalia 173, 212–213, 219, 259
Nick 219, 237–238, 245, 253, 259, 285
Oleta 197, 205
Olga [née Shapsnikoff] 159–160, 168, 204
Sergie 168, 219, 239, 245, 253, 260, 268
Sophia 136
Valentine "Tina" 212
Vasilii 161
Brady, John G. 116
Brown, William C. "Bill" 211, 216, 223
Bryant, Charles 73–74
Buckley, Paul 136, 139, 143, 146–148, 150–151
Burdukofski, Ruff 92–93

C

Caldwell, Jenabe and Elaine 262
Carlisle Indian School 139, 200
Carter, Arletta 165, 182, 196, 201, 208
Catherine II 18, 41, 55
Chercasen, Dorofey "Rusty" 237, 246, 248, 250
Chernofski 4, 7, 17–19, 21, 51, 59, 63, 66, 70, 72, 77,
79, 83–86, 90, 91, 93–95, 97, 99–100, 105, 111–
114, 117, 120–121, 125, 127–129, 131, 136–137,
139, 143, 146–147, 149–155, 157, 160, 167, 173,
199–200, 207, 212, 215, 230–232, 238–240, 239,
243, 255, 264–265, 276, 280
Christoffers, Harry J. 143, 145, 147, 150
Clerke, Charles 31–32, 40, 43–45
Commander Islands (Bering, Mednoi) 4, 55, 203, 321
Cook, James 29–32, 37–45, 47–49
creole (terminology) 66, 105, 110

D

Dall, William Healy 74, 85, 87–88, 101, 317
Dalrymple, Al 53
Davenport, Noah and Clara 123–124, 124, 128, 188,
229
Davidson, George 5, 7, 63, 71, 79, 118, 319
Deep Bay (Village) 32, 34, 37, 42, 61, 68
Denisoff, Afanasii 136, 159
Denisoff (family) 103, 136

Denisoff, Ivan [John] 162, 164, 168, 202–205,
220–221, 229–230, 232, 255
Denisoff, Martha 166, 168, 196
Denisoff, Nikifor 136, 166, 168, 200, 202–203
Diakanoff, Cecil 235
Diakanoff, Mary [né Moller] V, 159, 162, 164, 167,
168, 194, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 204, 220,
225, 229, 236, 244, 249, 253, 285, 288, 295, 296,
300, 308, 312
Dirks, Henry 95, 115
Dirks, Kathy 2, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304
Dirks, Moses 172
Dushkin, George 257
Dushkin, Lavera 244, 245, 247, 249
Dushkot Island 185, 228
Dutch Harbor 114, 116, 117, 120, 124, 141, 142, 143,
158, 211, 214, 230, 231, 233, 235, 236, 237, 240,
258, 259, 261, 267, 296, 302, 319
Dyakanoff, Ivan 98
Dyakanoff, Kathryn 139
Dyakanoff, William [Bill] 214, 267

E

Elliott, Henry W. 5, 16, 31, 73, 76, 78, 87, 90, 92, 95,
149, 320
Emilian Berikoff 121
English Bay [Samgan Udaa] 31, 32, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42,
43, 148
epidemics
 influenza 116, 152, 153, 180
 influenza and measles 116
Ermeloff, Afenogan 286
Ermeloff, Akenfa "Candy" 253
Ermeloff, ALEX 9, 19, 138, 187, 193, 220, 221, 228,
236, 245, 253, 264, 266, 267, 268, 269, 276, 280
Ermeloff, Irene [i.e. Irene Lukanin] 251, 266
Ermeloff, Ruff 185, 191, 193, 228, 230, 233, 245, 265,
266, 267
Ermeloff, Sophia 190
Ermeloff, William 246, 247, 286, 310

F

Finch, Durell 211, 222
Foley, D.P. 122, 125, 126, 127, 128, 131, 171
Fortress Rock 163, 164
fox 18, 23, 35, 73, 85, 100, 101, 124, 125, 126, 128,
141, 142, 143, 146, 147, 149, 165, 167, 173, 174,
186, 192, 199, 200, 211, 222, 230, 232, 265
fox trapping 128, 141, 142, 143, 149, 167, 222

Fox Islands 14, 18, 21, 38, 42, 43, 44, 55, 61
fur seals 21, 48, 73, 75, 78, 83, 92, 93, 99, 100, 106,
117, 127, 128, 149, 288
pelagic sealing 113, 150

G

Galaktionoff
Akenfa 175, 177, 179, 207, 209, 210
Anna 135
Arseni 135
Frank 173, 176, 209
Gabriel 135
Irene 221, 266, 268
Jenny 276, 280
Marina 220, 225
Marva. *See* Petukoff, Marva
Molly. *See* Lukanin: Molly
Nicholai "Nick" V, VI, 6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 19, 22, 33, 79,
80, 102, 122, 133, 134, 135, 138, 153, 154, 160,
172, 173, 174, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 185, 186,
187, 189, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 220, 221,
222, 228, 235, 240, 251, 264, 265, 266, 267, 276,
285, 288, 291, 294, 302, 305, 307, 311, 312, 313
Parascovia. *See* Lekanoff, Parascovia
Peter 221, 222, 245
Philip 153, 175, 181
Tikhon 134
Galaktionov, Ivan K. 134
Galanin, Moses 209
gardens 61, 116, 166, 178, 182
Gardner
George 165, 166
Victoria 201, 209, 223
Gardner, Paul W. 200
Geeslin, Fred 246
Glotov
Stepan 17, 21
Golodoff, John 267
Gordaoff, George V, 161, 196, 203, 205, 220, 239, 240,
247, 252, 253, 260, 285, 288, 289, 295, 296, 297,
299, 300, 301
Goss
Albert C. 143, 145, 148, 153
Clara 224
Greenbaum, Alfred 67, 76, 88, 103
Gromoff, Ishmael 138
Gronholdt, Andrew 231

H

Hapoff, Steven 53
Harrington, Mark 86
Harris, Arthur "Art" 151, 203
Healy, Michael A. 96, 97, 320
Henderson, James and Carrye 164, 165, 166, 167, 169,
196, 224
Holmes, Milton 154
Hooper, C.L. 7, 75, 78, 101, 103, 114, 115, 135, 136,
321
Hotovitsky [Dimitri] 148, 150, 151, 188
Hrdlička 203, 214, 321
Hrdlička, Aleš 203, 214, 321

I

Iliuliuk 1, 4, 25, 41, 42, 45, 49, 55, 56, 61, 62, 63, 66,
69, 71, 72, 73, 79, 89, 91, 100, 101, 103, 105,
106, 120, 133, 134, 135, 138, 139, 224. *See*
also Unalaska (village)
influenza 116, 152, 153, 180
iqya{. *See* baidarka
Islands of Four Mountains 14, 17, 25, 42, 192
It{aada{ 21, 22, 23, 29
Izmailov, Gerasim 42, 43, 44, 102

J

Jackson, Sheldon 200
Jacobsen, Harry 169, 196, 199, 255
Japanese
Before WWII 113, 120, 136, 211, 228, 229, 230, 233,
235, 236, 237, 252, 255, 278, 283, 293
invasion of Aleutians 236, 237, 252, 255, 278, 283
Japanese Americans 278
Jones, Dorothy VI, 139, 223
Jorgensen, Jessica 225, 227
Jr. 163

K

Kafoury, Nadir C. 118, 141
Kagulu{ 39, 49
Kashevaroff, B.P. 116, 143, 295
Kastromitin
Dorofey 155, 169
family 133, 169
Kedrovsky, Alexander 66, 115, 118, 119, 120, 122
Killisnoo 237, 250, 255, 258
King, George 136

King, Lt. James 32, 39
Kiska 237, 255
Kittredge, Ellen Louise 109
Kohlhoff, Dean 240, 243, 246, 250, 253, 321
Kozloff

(family) 137, 185, 189
Jacob 137, 185, 189
Kozloff, Jacob 137, 185, 189

Krenitzin Islands 4

Kriukov
Gregory 58
Ivan 56, 58, 113
Stepan 60

Krukoff
Efimia 136
Matrona 133, 153

Kudrin
Alexei 136, 161
Cornelius 105, 136, 139, 145, 159, 168, 203, 221,
239, 245, 253, 260, 261, 265
Dora [née Borenin] VI, 157, 167, 197, 219, 221, 230,
239, 268, 276
Eva 2, 168, 205, 221, 229, 238, 244, 249, 295, 301
(family) 136, 160, 204
George 169, 221, 252, 260, 296
Ivan I. [John J.] 113, 136, 159, 195
Mike 167, 169, 196, 221, 245, 253, 269
Olga 169, 221, 260, 296
Peter 169, 203, 205, 221, 260
Polly. *See also* Lekanoff: Pauline
Sergie 169, 203, 245, 253
Sophia. *See* Pletnikoff, Sophia
Tatiana (née Nevzoroff) 205, 221
Vassa 168, 239, 249

Kulchitsky, Theodosius 209, 213
Kuliliak Bay 7, 48, 148, 162, 200, 203

L

Larsen, A.M. 105
Larsen, Captain 175
Ledyard, John 41
Lekanoff
Arthur 176, 209, 268
Constantine 153, 182
Frederick VI, 2, 153, 170
Helen 236, 268
Jennie V, 222, 269
Pauline 105
Lekanoff, Parascovia 177, 307

Lukanin
Marfa 101
Molly 220, 221, 240, 251, 265, 266, 268, 269, 280
Peter 190, 193, 221, 228, 236, 253

M

Makarín
Agrafina 190, 221, 265, 280
Alexei 66
Andrew VI, 1, 9, 14, 15, 66, 69, 102, 139, 153, 181,
185, 187, 190, 191, 193, 220, 221, 228, 230, 233,
240, 245, 253, 264, 265, 267, 269, 270, 272, 273,
276, 280, 300, 301, 302, 304
Elia 190, 191
Eustina (née Sovoroff) 189, 228, 241, 268, 271
Irene 5, 189, 190, 221, 233, 236, 240, 247, 263, 265,
283, 311, 316
Terentii 66, 97, 101, 102, 105, 109, 117, 137, 138
Makushin 1–4, 7–9, 11, 13, 17, 19–21, 23, 25–26,
47–48, 50–51, 53–55, 58–61, 63, 65–68, 70–74,
77–81, 83, 85, 89–90, 92, 94–95, 97, 99–101,
103–109, 111, 113–115, 117, 120–123, 126–
129, 131–135, 138–139, 141–147, 147, 150,
152–155, 157–159, 160, 167, 170–181, 182–
183, 185–186, 196, 202, 206–216, 219–222, 225,
227, 231–232, 235–237, 239–240, 243–246,
250, 253, 255, 258–260, 264, 267, 269, 274–276,
280, 283–291, 305, 307, 309, 323
Chapel of St. Gregory 66, 111
Chapel of the Nativity of Christ 111, 177
resettlement 260, 263, 267
sea otter hunters 73, 127
volcanic disturbances 79
Volcano 6, 179
Margaret Bay (Unalaska Island) 231, 233
Martin, Jack 199
Marutani 278
May, Alan G. 203
McCracken, Harold 162
McGlashan
Feckla [née Prokopeuff] 95
Hugh 95, 115, 117, 150, 231, 252
Irene 2, 231, 287–288, 294–295, 298, 301, 304–305
Nick 231, 263
McIntyre, Hugh Henry 73
Mensoff
Anna 251, 260
Jane VI, VII, 2, 238, 285, 288, 295, 296, 298, 299,
301, 309

John 260, 296
Larry 276, 280
Olga 238, 241, 260
Merck, Carl 49
Moller
Alice 136, 152, 159, 164, 196–197, 201–202, 205–
206, 229, 254–255, 259, 263, 267, 270, 288
Carl 168, 236, 261, 270
Charles 162, 169
John VI, 263
Mary. *See* Diakanoff, Mary [né Moller]
Morzhovoi 114, 115, 117, 149
Muir, John 96
Murie, Olaus 223

N

Nagoski, Basil 262
National Park Service
Lost Villages Project 1, 263, 283, 288, 316, 323
Natrubin, Peter 40
Nestor, [Bishop] 134
Netsvetov, Iakov 55–57, 69, 318
Neumann, Rudolph 83, 98, 103, 115
Newhall, Albert 116
Newman, Arthur 93
Nick Borenin 219, 237, 238, 245, 253, 259, 285
Nikolski 1, 4, 17, 59, 65, 76, 88, 89, 93, 94, 97, 99, 113,
116, 117, 128, 138, 142, 147, 148, 149, 151, 152,
164, 173, 186, 188, 195, 209, 232, 237, 239, 240,
241, 243, 244, 245, 246, 247, 249, 250, 251, 253,
260, 264, 276, 279, 286, 310
North American Commercial Company (NAC)
113–114, 117–118, 120, 132, 141–144, 160

O

Old Man Rocks 14, 143, 229
Olgin, Ivan [John] 104, 105, 110
Oliver, Simeon 263
Olsen
Annie 182, 207, 286, 291
John (i.e. John Borenin) 219
John Peter Halberg. *See* Olsen: Pete
Pete 174, 177–178, 181–182, 207–208, 210–212,
215–216, 219, 231, 237, 245, 251, 259, 286, 291
Tatiana "Katie" [née Golodoff] 180–181, 207, 213,
219, 251
Oskolkoff, Simeon 270
Ounalashka Corporation 38, 277, 288, 295, 307, 316

P

Pacific American Fisheries 145–146, 148, 172
Pacific Northwest Aleut Council 285
Panteleev, Alexander 209
Petelin
Joseph 66, 67, 71, 104, 133
Serapion 104
Peterson, William 95
Petikoff
Aken 175
(family) VII, 55
Mark 251–252, 255, 257–258
Matfey 177, 209
Peter 146, 179, 208
Simeon 175, 259
Yakeem "Jack" 177, 179
Petroff, Ivan 13, 75, 79, 104, 320
Petroff, Olga 137
Petukhof, Gregory 66–67, 71
Petukoff, Marva 9–10, 80, 133
Pletnikoff, Sophia 122, 160, 280
Popoff
Barbara 190
(family) 137
Ignaty 190
Kerik 137, 143
Matthew 190
Pribilof Islands. *See also* St. George and St. Paul

Q

Qagaan Tayaḡungin 4
Qawalangin 4, 48, 54
Qigiiḡun 4, 48, 54
Quean, O.K. 150, 164

R

Reinken
Adolph 84, 89, 105, 160
Alexandra 143, 160, 200
John 200
Olga 139
Sophia 120
Robinson, Verne 207, 216, 230, 264
Rose, Charlie 172
Russian-American Company 4, 7, 20, 24, 29, 47,
55–56, 62–63, 65–68, 87, 104
Rysev, Nicholas 97, 113

S

Sanak 84, 94, 95, 99, 102, 103, 105, 114, 115, 121, 157
 Sapozhnikov, Iakov Ivanov 43
 Sapozhnikov, Petr 102
 Sarychev, Graviil 6, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 322, 323
 Sauer, Martin 24, 25, 48, 51, 62
 Schaleben, H.O. 125
 sea lion 14–15, 33, 35, 87–90, 114, 122, 129, 149, 159, 161, 179, 230
 Sea Otter 82–83, 85, 94, 109, 127
 Sedanka Island 4, 24, 30, 63, 124, 189, 192–193, 229, 235, 264, 265, 322
 Sedanka Point 5, 18
 Seward Gateway 120, 167, 172, 182, 183, 190, 199, 200, 202
 Shaiashnikov
 Alexander 79, 97
 Innokentii 5, 52, 63, 66–71, 76–77, 79, 102
 Kas'ian 65, 69
 Mariia [née Alekseev] 69, 74
 Vasilii 95, 133, 139
 Shapsnikoff
 Anfesia 190, 227, 253, 257, 270, 276, 280
 Elia 121, 158, 171–172
 sheep ranching 150, 154, 200–203, 207, 213, 232, 238, 260, 285
 Shelikhov, Gregori 24
 Shelikoff, Luke 246, 250, 259, 277
 ships
 Albatross 111, 114, 324
 Bear 97, 120, 175
 Bella 94
 Columbia (SS) 150, 239–240, 244–245
 David S. Branch 255
 Delarof (USAT) 142, 237, 239, 259
 Discovery (HMS) 25, 29, 32, 40, 43
 Dora (SS) 85, 94
 Dorothy (schooner) 175
 Effie M. Morrissey (schooner) 162
 Eloise (schooner) 151
 Elvira (schooner) 120, 122, 127–128
 Emma (schooner) 118
 Everett Hays (schooner) 110, 116, 118, 120, 127
 Gavriil 19
 Glory of Russia 48, 49
 Haida (USRC) 149
 Ingham (USCGC) 213
 Itasca (USCGC) 176, 214
 J.P. Ward (schooner) 117

Kanaga Native (M/V) 180
Katie-O 174
Kensai Maru (schooner) 120
Lettie (schooner) 150, 153
Manning (USRC) 117, 158, 171, 186, 229
Mathew Turner (Brig) 94
McCulloch (USRC) 73, 146, 159
Nero (USS) 187
Newport (whaler) 109
Northland (USCGC) 192
Northwestern (SS) 233
Oduna (SS) 152, 154
Pearl (schooner) 94, 105
Penguin (MS) 246
Polar Bear 175
Resolution (HMS) 29, 38–39, 41, 43, 318, 321
Rush (Richard Rush) (USRC) 73, 78, 96, 116, 122, 318
Saki Maru (schooner) 120
Selma (schooner) 117
Shellfish (M/V) 263
Shoshone (USCGC) 214, 232
Starr (SS) 172, 208, 216
St. Paul 137, 231
Sv. Andreian i Nataĭia 21
Sv. Evpl [St. Euplus] 43
Sv. Nikolai 19
Sv. Pavel 42
Sv. Petr i Pavel 21
Sv. Zakharii i Elisaveta 19
Sv. Zhivotvoriashchaia Troitsa 19
Tahoe (USRC) 174, 176, 192, 195, 200, 201
Tallapoosa (USCGC) 213, 214
Three Saints (Tri Sviatitelia) 44, 47
Umnak Native (M/V) 161, 195
Unalga (USRC) 126–127, 143, 146–148, 153–154, 185–187
 (USCGC) 211
William L. Thompson (USAT) 253
Wolcott (USRC) 78
Yorktown (USS) 114
 Siems-Drake 231, 233
 Siftsoff
 Anesia 138
 (family) 137
 Gabriel 137
 Leontii 137
 Sitka Tribes of Alaska 307
 Smith, Andrew C. 151, 165

Sovoroff
Agrafina [née Borenin] 160
Irene 251
Leonty 245, 248, 250
Sergie 35, 276
Sproat, W.R. "Rex" 154
Stepetin
Alfred 261, 270, 276
Annie 227
German 202, 227
Stevenson, Donald 143, 154
St. George (village) 4, 74, 87, 90–91, 101, 134, 144,
209, 227, 236–237, 252, 255, 279–280, 288. *See also* Pribilof Islands
St. Paul (village) 4, 65, 69, 74, 87–88, 90–93, 120, 132,
167, 176, 193, 203, 209, 212, 214–215, 229,
231–232, 237, 243, 249, 252–253, 255, 259–260,
265–266, 279, 288
subsistence practices
fish
cod 33, 99, 145, 147–148, 151, 161, 189, 210–211
halibut 33, 38, 42, 248
roots of 56
salmon 20, 23, 33, 40, 42–43, 48, 59–60, 68, 122,
138, 145–148, 151, 160, 166–167, 172, 181, 189,
201–202, 240, 245, 296
Swanson, Henry 84, 121, 142, 151, 154, 164, 172, 173,
185, 193, 200, 211, 213, 223, 231, 324
Swetstof, Michael VI
Swineford, Alfred Peter 98–99

T

Tanadgusix (TDX) Corporation (St. Paul) 288
Tanaq Corporation (St. George) 288
Tcheripanoff
Eva [née Kudrin] V, 161, 204, 230, 236, 238–241,
262, 283–284, 288, 294, 311
John 161, 167, 249, 260
William 9
Telanoff (family) 133
Theodosius, [Father]. *See* Kulchitsky, Theodosius
Thornton, Harrison H. 109, 110
Tiġlaġ VII, 1, 286–290, 292, 295, 301, 304
Townsend, C.H. 114, 115, 116
tsunami (1946) 265
Turner, Lucien M. 101
Tutiakoff
Michael 195
Paul and Alice 265

Philemon 9, 258, 267, 278
Sergie 227
Tracy 267

U

Ugadaga Bay 61, 124, 126, 189, 218, 228, 232,
265–267, 270, 308
Unalaska City School District 284
Unalaska (village) 80, 93. *See also* Iliuliuk
and Three Villages 10–11, 54–55, 61–62, 65, 68, 70,
76, 85–86, 91, 94, 100, 104, 106, 111, 113, 117,
125, 132–133, 137–139, 141–143, 189, 202, 220,
232, 236–237, 239, 243–244, 249, 253, 258, 264,
267–268, 275–276, 278–279
Church of the Holy Ascension 100, 111, 113, 118,
196, 209, 262, 267–268, 268, 271
founding 25
incorporation 224
"New Town" 269
Unalga 30–31, 49, 54, 59, 61, 92, 126–127, 143,
146–148, 153–154, 185–187, 189, 264–265
radio station 187
Unalga Pass 30–31, 31, 92
Unangam tunuu (Aleut language) 5, 10–11, 64,
69–70, 120, 139, 177, 186, 191, 202, 205, 225,
227, 240, 271, 275
literacy 65, 69, 318
Unga 68, 74, 96, 99, 101, 116
U.S. Congress 73, 75, 120, 222, 224, 230, 278
U.S. Fish and Wildlife 1, 94, 150, 152, 223, 252, 284,
286, 288, 292, 316–318

V

Veniaminov
Ioann 5–6, 9, 10, 13, 22, 24–25, 54, 58–66, 69–70,
74–75

W

Wacker, Eugene 247–248, 252, 309
Ward Lake 242, 244, 246–250, 252–253, 255, 257, 259,
285–286, 309–310
Webber, John 28–29, 32–34, 36–38, 82
Western Fur and Trading Company 77, 101
Western Pacific Livestock Company 152, 199
Weyer, Edward Moffat 163
whale 15–17, 20, 24, 34–35, 42, 49–50, 72, 89, 204
whalers 79, 99, 103, 109
White, Leslie A. 182

Wickersham, James 67, 78, 137–138
Wosnesenski Island 83, 85

Y

Yatchmeneff

Alexei 133, 139, 143, 145, 148, 151, 173, 225–226,
226

John 176, 192, 208

Yatchmenev, Abraham 66, 105, 133

Yatchmenoff

Elsie 220, 269

Fedey [Feddie] 228, 245, 247, 263, 268

George 154, 191–193, 221, 233, 245, 266–267

Gregorii 138

John B. (first) 137, 163, 167, 195, 221, 239, 265

John (second) 137

Laressa 167, 239

Nellie 220–221, 251, 260, 306, 308

Peter 203, 221, 239, 306, 308

Vasilii 137

Willie 193, 245, 253, 265–266, 280

Z

Zeusler, F.A. 193, 232, 244, 252



Cupola from the Kashega Chapel in the Unalaska churchyard. Photograph by Ray Hudson, n.d.

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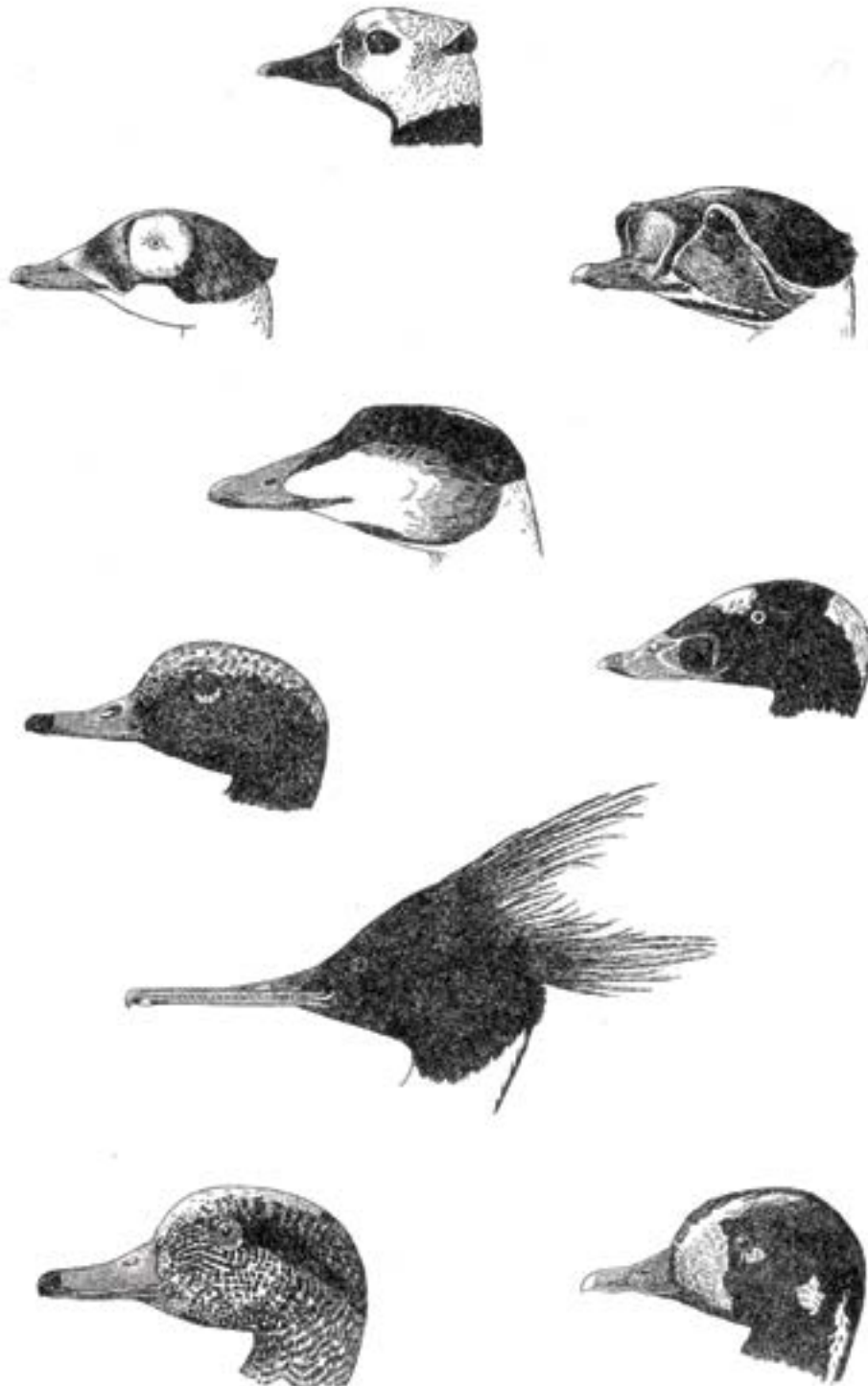
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AMAWL

FIG. 6.

Spectacled eider
European widgeon
Baldpate

Steller's eider
Pacific eider
Red-breasted merganser

King eider
Surf scoter
Pacific harlequin

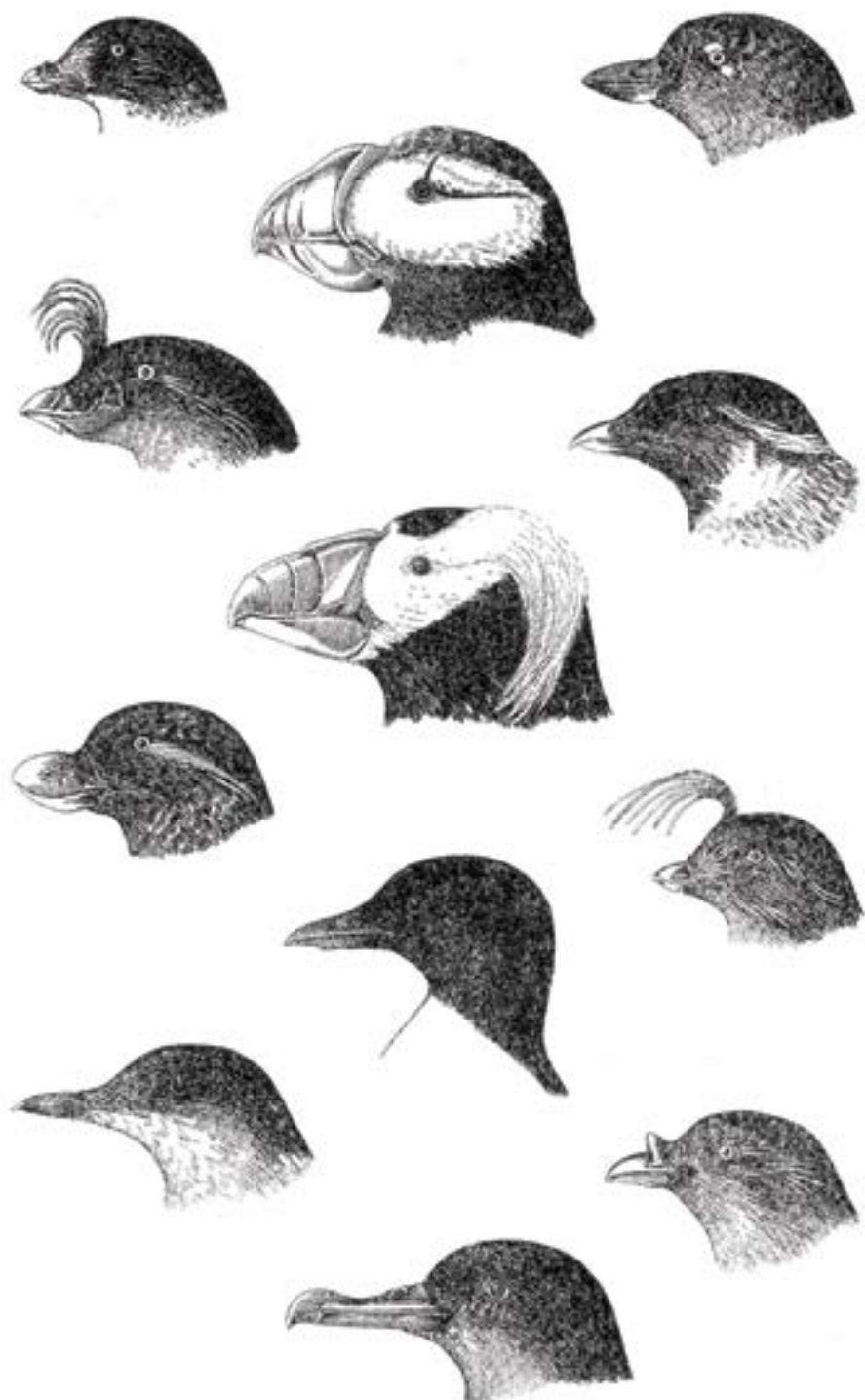


FIG. 7.

Least auklet
 Crested auklet
 Paroquet auklet
 Marbled murrelet

Horned puffin
 Tufted puffin
 Pallas's murre
 Slender-billed shearwater

Cassin's auklet
 Ancient murrelet
 Whiskered auklet
 Rhinoceros auklet



Newly planted cross at Biorka, with the small structure Andrew Makarin built over the site of the chapel, September 2, 2010. Photograph by Greg Jones.



Ray Hudson, Beaver Inlet, Unalaska, June 2013
Photo by Suzi Golodoff.

AUTHOR RAY HUDSON lived at Unalaska from 1964 to 1992, during which time he taught various subjects in the public school and coordinated the Indian Education programs. He is the author of several works on the Aleutians including *Moments Rightly Placed*, an Aleutian Memoir (Epicenter Press) and *Family After All, Alaska's Jesse Lee Home, Vol. 1, Unalaska 1889-1925* (Hardscratch Press). He edited *Before the Storm: A Year in the Pribilof Islands, 1941-1942* by Fredericka Martin and *An Aleutian Ethnography* by Lucien M. Turner (both University of Alaska Press). He lives in Middlebury, Vermont, with his wife Shelly.

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When World War II encircled the Aleutian Islands, the lives of the Unanga inhabitants and the communities they lived in were forever changed. Perhaps the most profound impacts were on three small traditional villages: Biorka, Kashega, and Makushin. *Lost Villages of the Eastern Aleutians* is the story of how these communities endured for centuries, how they survived the challenges of Russian and American ownership, and how war hastened their disappearance. It is the story of how the last generation to live in these villages made lasting contributions to an enduring culture and way of life.



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